

ESSAYS OF MONTAIGNE



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ESSAYS OF MONTAIGNE

TRANSLATED BY CHARLES COTTON

TO WHICH ARE ADDED SOME ACCOUNT OF THE
LIFE OF MONTAIGNE, NOTES, A TRANS-
LATION OF ALL THE LETTERS KNOWN
TO BE EXTANT, AND AN
ENLARGED INDEX

With Portraits

EDITED BY

WILLIAM CAREW HAZLITT

IN FIVE VOLUMES
VOLUME THE FOURTH

Que sçais-je?

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ESSAYS OF MONTAIGNE

BOOK THE SECOND—(Continued)

ESSAYS OF MONTAIGNE

BOOK THE SECOND—(Continued)

CHAPTER XVIII

OF GIVING THE LIE

WELL, but some one will say to me, this design of making a man's self the subject of his writing, were indeed excusable in rare and famous men, who by their reputation had given others a curiosity to be fully informed of them. It is most true, I confess and know very well, that a mechanic will scarce lift his eyes from his work to look at an ordinary man, whereas a man will forsake his business and his shop to stare at an eminent person when he comes into a town. It misbecomes any other to give his own character, but him who has qualities worthy of imitation, and whose life and opinions may serve for example. Cæsar and Xenophon had a just and solid foundation whereon to found their narrations, in the greatness of their own performances; and it were to be wished that we had the journals of Alexander the Great, the commentaries that Augustus, Cato, Sylla, Brutus, and others left of their actions; of such persons men love and contemplate the very statues even in copper and marble.

This remonstrance is very true; but it very little concerns me:—

"Non recito cuiquam, nisi amicis, idque coactus ;
 Non ubivis, coramve quibuslibet, in medio qui
 Scripta foro recitant, sunt multi, quique lavantes."¹

I do not here form a statue to erect in the great square of a city, in a church, or any public place :—

"Non equidem hoc studeo, bullatis ut mihi nugis,
 Pagina turgescat . . .
 Secreti loquimur"² :

'tis for some corner of a library, or to entertain a neighbour, a kinsman, a friend, who has a mind to renew his acquaintance and familiarity with me in this image of myself. Others have been encouraged to speak of themselves, because they found the subject worthy and rich ; I, on the contrary, am the bolder, by reason the subject is so poor and sterile that I cannot be suspected of ostentation. I judge freely of the actions of others ; I give little of my own to judge of, because they are nothing : I do not find so much good in myself, that I cannot tell it without blushing.

What contentment would it not be to me to hear any one thus relate to me the manners, faces, countenances, the ordinary words and fortunes of my ancestors ? how attentively should I listen to it ! In earnest, it would be evil nature to despise so much as the pictures of our friends and predecessors, the fashion of their clothes and arms. I preserve their writing, seal, and a particular sword they wore, and have not thrown the long staves my father used to carry in his hand, out of my closet :—

¹ "I repeat my poems only to my friends, and when bound to do so ; not before every one and everywhere ; there are plenty of reciters in the open market-place and at the baths"—Horace, *Sat*, i. 4, 73

² "I study not to make my pages swell with empty trifles, you and I are talking in private"—Persius, *Sat*, v 19

"Paterna vestis, et annulus, tanto charior est posteris, quanto erga parentes major affectus."¹

If my posterity, nevertheless, shall be of another mind, I shall be avenged on them; for they cannot care less for me than I shall then do for them. All the traffic that I have in this with the public is, that I borrow their utensils of writing, which are more easy and most at hand; and in recompense shall, peradventure, keep a pound of butter in the market from melting in the sun:—

"Ne toga cordyllis, ne penula desit olivis ²,

Et laxas scombris sæpe dabo tunicas "³,

And though nobody should read me, have I wasted time in entertaining myself so many idle hours in so pleasing and useful thoughts? In moulding this figure upon myself, I have been so often constrained to temper and compose myself in a right posture, that the copy is truly taken, and has in some sort formed itself; painting myself for others, I represent myself in a better colouring than my own natural complexion. I have no more made my book than my book has made me: 'tis a book consubstantial with the author, of a peculiar design, a parcel of my life, and whose business is not designed for others, as that of all other books is. In giving myself so continual and so exact an account of myself, have I lost my time? For they who sometimes cursorily survey themselves only, do not so strictly examine themselves, nor

¹ "A father's garment and ring is by so much dearer to his posterity, as there is the greater affection towards parents."—St. Aug., *De Civit. Dei*, i. 13

² "Let not wrappers be wanting to tunny-fish, nor olives, . . . and I shall supply loose coverings to mackerel."—Martial, xiii 1, 1.

³ Catullus, xc. 14, 8. Montaigne semi-seriously speculates on the possibility of his MS. being used to wrap up butter

penetrate so deep, as he who makes it his business, his study, and his employment, who intends a lasting record, with all his fidelity, and with all his force. The most delicious pleasures digested within, avoid leaving any trace of themselves, and avoid the sight not only of the people, but of any other person. How often has this work diverted me from troublesome thoughts? and all that are frivolous should be reputed so. Nature has presented us with a large faculty of entertaining ourselves alone; and often calls us to it, to teach us that we owe ourselves in part to society, but chiefly and mostly to ourselves. That I may habituate my fancy even to meditate in some method and to some end, and to keep it from losing itself and roving at random, 'tis but to give to body and to record all the little thoughts that present themselves to it. I give ear to my whimsies, because I am to record them. It often falls out, that being displeased at some action that civility and reason will not permit me openly to reprove, I here disgorge myself, not without design of public instruction: and also these poetical lashes:—

“Zon sur l'œil, zon sur le groin,
Zon sur le dos du Sagoin,”¹—

imprint themselves better upon paper than upon the flesh. What if I listen to books a little more attentively than ordinary, since I watch if I can purloin anything that may adorn or support my own? I have not at all studied to make a book, but I have in some sort studied because I had made it; if it be studying to scratch and pinch now one author, and then another, either by the

¹ “A slap on his eye, a slap on his snout, a slap on Sagoin's back”—Marot. *Fripelippes, Valet de Marot à Sagoin.*

head or foot, not with any design to form opinions from them, but to assist, second, and fortify those I already have embraced.

But whom shall we believe in the report he makes of himself in so corrupt an age? considering there are so few, if any at all, whom we can believe when speaking of others, where there is less interest to lie. The first thing done in the corruption of manners is banishing truth; for, as Pindar says,¹ to be true is the beginning of a great virtue, and the first article that Plato requires in the governor of his Republic. The truth of these days is not that which really is, but what every man persuades another man to believe; as we generally give the name of money not only to pieces of the just alloy, but even to the false also, if they will pass. Our nation has long been reproached with this vice; for Salvianus of Marseilles, who lived in the time of the Emperor Valentinian, says that lying and forswearing themselves is with the French not a vice, but a way of speaking.² He who would enhance this testimony, might say that it is now a virtue in them; men form and fashion themselves to it as to an exercise of honour; for dissimulation is one of the most notable qualities of this age.

I have often considered whence this custom that we so religiously observe should spring, of being more highly offended with the reproach of a vice so familiar to us than with any other, and that it should be the highest insult that can in words be done us to reproach us with a lie. Upon examination, I find that it is natural most to defend the defects with which we are most tainted. It seems

¹ Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.*, vi. 10, Stobæus, *Serm.*, xi.

² Salvianus, *De Gubernatione Dei*, i. 14.

as if by resenting and being moved at the accusation, we in some sort acquit ourselves of the fault ; though we have it in effect, we condemn it in outward appearance. May it not also be that this reproach seems to imply cowardice and feebleness of heart ? of which can there be a more manifest sign than to eat a man's own words—nay, to lie against a man's own knowledge ? Lying is a base vice ; a vice that one of the ancients portrays in the most odious colours when he says, " that it is to manifest a contempt of God, and withal a fear of men."¹ It is not possible more fully to represent the horror, baseness, and irregularity of it ; for what can a man imagine more hateful and contemptible than to be a coward towards men, and valiant against his Maker ? Our intelligence being by no other way communicable to one another but by a particular word, he who falsifies that betrays public society. 'Tis the only way by which we communicate our thoughts and wills ; 'tis the interpreter of the soul, and if it deceive us, we no longer know nor have further tie upon one another ; if that deceive us, it breaks all our correspondence, and dissolves all the ties of government. Certain nations of the newly discovered Indies (I need not give them names, seeing they are no more ; for, by wonderful and unheard-of example, the desolation of that conquest has extended to the utter abolition of names and the ancient knowledge of places) offered to their gods human blood, but only such as was drawn from the tongue and ears, to expiate for the sin of lying, as well heard as pronounced. That good fellow of Greece² said that children are amused with toys and men with words.

¹ Plutarch, *Life of Lysander*, c. 4.

² Lysander, *idem*, *ib.*

As to our diverse usages of giving the lie, and the laws of honour in that case, and the alteration they have received, I defer saying what I know of them to another time, and shall learn, if I can, in the meanwhile, at what time the custom took beginning of so exactly weighing and measuring words, and of making our honour interested in them; for it is easy to judge that it was not anciently amongst the Romans and Greeks. And it has often seemed to me strange to see them rail at and give one another the lie without any quarrel. Their laws of duty steered some other course than ours. Cæsar is sometimes called thief, and sometimes drunkard, to his teeth.¹ We see the liberty of invective they practised upon one another, I mean the greatest chiefs of war of both nations, where words are only revenged with words, and do not proceed any farther.

CHAPTER XIX

OF LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE

'Tis usual to see good intentions, if carried on without moderation, push men on to very vicious effects. In this dispute which has at this time engaged France in a civil war, the better and the soundest cause no doubt is that which maintains the ancient religion and government of the kingdom. Nevertheless, amongst the good men of that party (for I do not speak of those who only make a pretence of it, either to execute their own particular revenges or to gratify their avarice, or to conciliate the favour of princes, but of those who

¹ Plutarch, *Life of Pompey*, c. 16; *Life of Cato of Utica*, c. 7.

engage in the quarrel out of true zeal to religion and a holy desire to maintain the peace and government of their country), of these, I say, we see many whom passion transports beyond the bounds of reason, and sometimes inspires with counsels that are unjust and violent, and, moreover, rash.

It is certain that in those first times, when our religion began to gain authority with the laws, zeal armed many against all sorts of pagan books, by which the learned suffered an exceeding great loss, a disorder that I conceive to have done more prejudice to letters than all the flames of the barbarians. Of this Cornelius Tacitus is a very good testimony; for though the Emperor Tacitus,¹ his kinsman, had, by express order, furnished all the libraries in the world with it, nevertheless one entire copy could not escape the curious examination of those who desired to abolish it for only five or six idle clauses that were contrary to our belief.

They had also the trick easily to lend undue praises to all the emperors who made for us, and universally to condemn all the actions of those who were adversaries, as is evidently manifest in the Emperor Julian, surnamed the Apostate,² who was, in truth, a very great and rare man, a man in whose soul philosophy was imprinted in the best characters, by which he professed to govern all his actions; and, in truth, there is no sort of virtue of which he has not left behind him very notable examples: in chastity (of which the whole of his

¹ Vospiscus, *in Vitâ*, c. 10.

² The character of the Emperor Julian was censured, when Montaigne was at Rome in 1581, by the Master of the Sacred Palace, who, however, as Montaigne tells us in his *Journal* (ii. 35), referred it to his conscience to alter what he should think in bad taste. This Montaigne did not do, and this chapter supplied Voltaire with the greater part of the praises he bestowed upon the Emperor —*Le Clerc*.

life gave manifest proof) we read the same of him that was said of Alexander and Scipio, that being in the flower of his age, for he was slain by the Parthians at one-and-thirty, of a great many very beautiful captives, he would not so much as look upon one.¹ As to his justice, he took himself the pains to hear the parties, and although he would out of curiosity inquire what religion they were of, nevertheless, the antipathy he had to ours never gave any counterpoise to the balance. He made himself several good laws, and repealed a great part of the subsidies and taxes levied by his predecessors.²

We have two good historians who were eye-witnesses of his actions: one of whom, Marcellinus, in several places of his history³ sharply reproves an edict of his whereby he interdicted all Christian rhetoricians and grammarians to keep school or to teach, and says he could wish that act of his had been buried in silence: it is probable that had he done any more severe thing against us, he, so affectionate as he was to our party, would not have passed it over in silence. He was indeed sharp against us, but yet no cruel enemy; for our own people⁴ tell this story of him, that one day, walking about the city of Chalcedon, Maris, bishop of the place, was so bold as to tell him that he was impious, and an enemy to Christ, at which, they say, he was no further moved than to reply, "Go, poor wretch, and lament the loss of thy eyes," to which the bishop replied again, "I thank Jesus Christ for taking away my sight, that I may not see thy impudent visage," affecting in that, they

¹ Ammianus Marcellinus, xxiv. 8.

² Idem, xxii. 10, xxv. 5, 6.

³ Idem.

⁴ Sosomenus, *Hist. Eccl.*, v. 4.

say, a philosophical patience. But this action of his bears no comparison to the cruelty that he is said to have exercised against us. "He was," says Eutropius,¹ my other witness, "an enemy to Christianity, but without putting his hand to blood." And, to return to his justice, there is nothing in that whereof he can be accused, the severity excepted he practised in the beginning of his reign against those who had followed the party of Constantius, his predecessor.² As to his sobriety, he lived always a soldier-like life; and observed a diet and routine, like one that prepared and inured himself to the austerities of war.³ His vigilance was such, that he divided the night into three or four parts, of which the least was dedicated to sleep; the rest was spent either in visiting the state of his army and guards in person, or in study⁴; for amongst other rare qualities, he was very excellent in all sorts of learning. 'Tis said of Alexander the Great, that being in bed, for fear lest sleep should divert him from his thoughts and studies, he had always a basin set by his bedside, and held one of his hands out with a ball of copper in it, to the end, that, beginning to fall asleep, and his fingers leaving their hold, the ball by falling into the basin, might awake him. But the other had his soul so bent upon what he had a mind to do, and so little disturbed with fumes by reason of his singular abstinence, that he had no need of any such invention. As to his military experience, he was excellent in all the qualities of a great captain, as it was likely he should, being almost all his life in a continual exercise of war, and most of that time with us in France, against the

¹ x. 8.² Idem, xvi. 2.³ Ammianus Marcellinus, xxii. 2.⁴ Idem, *ibid.*

Germans and Franks: we hardly read of any man who ever saw more dangers, or who made more frequent proofs of his personal valour.

His death has something in it parallel with that of Epaminondas, for he was wounded with an arrow, and tried to pull it out, and had done so, but that, being edged, it cut and disabled his hand. He incessantly called out that they should carry him again into the heat of the battle, to encourage his soldiers, who very bravely disputed the fight without him, till night parted the armies.¹ He stood obliged to his philosophy for the singular contempt he had for his life and all human things. He had a firm belief of the immortality of souls.

In matter of religion he was wrong throughout, and was surnamed the Apostate for having relinquished ours: nevertheless, the opinion seems to me more probable, that he had never thoroughly embraced it, but had dissembled out of obedience to the laws, till he came to the empire. He was in his own so superstitious, that he was laughed at for it by those of his own time, of the same opinion, who jeeringly said, that had he got the victory over the Parthians, he had destroyed the breed of oxen in the world to supply his sacrifices.² He was, moreover, besotted with the art of divination, and gave authority to all sorts of predictions. He said, amongst other things at his death, that he was obliged to the gods, and thanked them, in that they would not cut him off by surprise, having long before advertised him of the place and hour of his death, nor by a mean and unmanly death, more becoming lazy and delicate people; nor by a death that was languishing, long, and painful; and that they had thought him worthy to die after that

¹ Ammianus Marcellinus, xxv. 3.

² Idem, xxv. 6.

noble manner, in the progress of his victories, in the flower of his glory.¹ He had a vision like that of Marcus Brutus, that first threatened him in Gaul, and afterward appeared to him in Persia just before his death.² These words that some make him say when he felt himself wounded: "Thou hast overcome, Nazarene"³; or as others, "Content thyself, Nazarene"; would hardly have been omitted, had they been believed, by my witnesses, who, being present in the army, have set down to the least motions and words of his end; no more than certain other miracles that are reported about it.

And to return to my subject, he long nourished, says Marcellinus,⁴ paganism in his heart; but all his army being Christians, he durst not own it. But in the end, seeing himself strong enough to dare to discover himself, he caused the temples of the gods to be thrown open, and did his uttermost to set on foot and to encourage idolatry. Which the better to effect, having at Constantinople found the people disunited, and also the prelates of the church divided amongst themselves, having convened them all before him, he earnestly admonished them to calm those civil dissensions, and that every one might freely, and without fear, follow his own religion.⁵ Which he the more sedulously solicited, in hope that this licence would augment the schisms and factions of their division, and hinder the people from reuniting, and consequently fortifying themselves against him by their unanimous intelligence and concord; having experienced by the cruelty of some Christians, that there is no beast in the world

¹ Ammianus Marcellinus, xxiv. 4.

² Idem, xx. 5; xxv. 2.

³ Theodosius, *Hist. Eccl.*, iii. 20

⁴ Idem, xxii. 2

⁵ Idem, xxii. 3

so much to be feared by man as man ; these are very nearly his words.

Wherein this is very worthy of consideration, that the Emperor Julian made use of the same receipt of liberty of conscience to inflame the civil dissensions that our kings do to extinguish them. So that a man may say on one side, that to give the people the reins to entertain every man his own opinion, is to scatter and sow division, and, as it were, to lend a hand to augment it, there being no legal impediment or restraint to stop or hinder their career ; but, on the other side, a man may also say, that to give the people the reins to entertain every man his own opinion, is to mollify and appease them by facility and toleration, and to dull the point which is whetted and made sharper by singularity, novelty, and difficulty : and I think it is better for the honour of the devotion of our kings, that not having been able to do what they would, they have made a show of being willing to do what they could.

CHAPTER XX

WE TASTE NOTHING PURE

THE feebleness of our condition is such that things cannot, in their natural simplicity and purity, fall into our use ; the elements that we enjoy are changed, and so 'tis with metals ; and gold must be debased with some other matter to fit it for our service. Neither has virtue, so simple as that which Aristo, Pyrrho, and also the Stoics, made the end of life ; nor the Cyrenaic and Aristippic pleasure, been without mixture useful to it. Of the pleasure

and goods that we enjoy, there is not one exempt from some mixture of ill and inconvenience:

"Medio de fonte leporum
Surgit amari aliquid, quod in ipsis floribus angat."¹

Our extremest pleasure has some sort of groaning and complaining in it; would you not say that it is dying of pain? Nay, when we frame the image of it in its full excellence, we stuff it with sickly and painful epithets and qualities, languor, softness, feebleness, faintness, *morbidezza*: a great testimony of their consanguinity and consubstantiality. The most profound joy has more of severity than gaiety in it. The highest and fullest contentment offers more of the grave than of the merry:—

"Ipsa felicitas, se nisi temperat, premit."²

Pleasure chews and grinds us; according to the old Greek verse,³ which says that the gods sell us all the goods they give us, that is to say, that they give us nothing pure and perfect, and that we do not purchase but at the price of some evil.

Labour and pleasure, very unlike in nature, associate, nevertheless, by I know not what natural conjunction. Socrates says,⁴ that some god tried to mix in one mass and to confound pain and pleasure, but not being able to do it, he bethought him at least to couple them by the tail. Metrodorus⁵ said, that in sorrow there is some mixture of pleasure. I know not whether or no he intended anything else by that saying; but for my part, I am of

¹ "From the very fountain of our pleasure, something rises that is bitter, which even in flowers destroys"—Lucretius, iv 1130.

² "Even felicity, unless it moderate itself, oppresses"—Seneca, *Ep*, 74

³ Epicharmus in Xenophon, *Mem. of Socrates*, ii. 1, 26

⁴ In *Phædo*, ii 1, 20

⁵ Seneca, *Ep*, 99.

opinion that there is design, consent, and complacency in giving a man's self up to melancholy. I say, that besides ambition, which may also have a stroke in the business, there is some shadow of delight and delicacy which smiles upon and flatters us even in the very lap of melancholy. Are there not some constitutions that feed upon it?—

“Est quædam flere voluptas”¹—

and one Attalus in Seneca² says, that the memory of our lost friends is as grateful to us, as bitterness in wine, when too old, is to the palate:—

“Minister vetuli, puer, Falerni
Inger’ mi calices amariores”³—

and as apples that have a sweet tartness.

Nature discovers this confusion to us; painters hold that the same motions and grimaces of the face that serve for weeping, serve for laughter too; and indeed, before the one or the other be finished, do but observe the painter's manner of handling, and you will be in doubt to which of the two the design tends; and the extreme of laughter does at last bring tears:—

“Nullum sine auctoramento malum est.”⁴

When I imagine man abounding with all the conveniences that are to be desired (let us put the case that all his members were always seized with a pleasure like that of generation, in its most excessive height) I feel him melting under the weight of his delight, and see him utterly unable to support so

¹ “Tis a certain kind of pleasure to weep.”—Ovid, *Trist.*, iv 3, 27

² *Ep.*, 70

³ “Boy, when you pour out old Falernian wine, the bitterest put into my bowl”—Catullus, xxvii 1

⁴ “No evil is without its compensation.”—Seneca, *Ep.*, 69.

pure, so continual, and so universal a pleasure. Indeed, he is running away whilst he is there, and naturally makes haste to escape, as from a place where he cannot stand firm, and where he is afraid of sinking.

When I religiously confess myself to myself, I find that the best virtue I have has in it some tincture of vice ; and I am afraid that Plato, in his purest virtue (I, who am as sincere and loyal a lover of virtue of that stamp as any other whatever), if he had listened and laid his ear close to himself —and he did so no doubt—would have heard some jarring note of human mixture, but faint and only perceptible to himself. Man is wholly and throughout but patch and motley. Even the laws of justice themselves cannot subsist without mixture of injustice ; insomuch that Plato says,¹ they undertake to cut off the hydra's head, who pretend to clear the law of all inconveniences :—

“*Omne magnum exemplum habet aliquid ex iniquo, quod contra singulos utilitate publica rependitur,*”²

says Tacitus.

It is likewise true, that for the use of life and the service of public commerce, there may be some excesses in the purity and perspicacity of our minds ; that penetrating light has in it too much of subtlety and curiosity : we must a little stupefy and blunt them to render them more obedient to example and practice, and a little veil and obscure them, the better to proportion them to this dark and earthly life. And therefore common and less speculative souls are found to be more proper for and more

¹ *Republic*, iv. 5.

² “Every great example has in it some mixture of injustice, which recompenses the wrong done to particular men by the public utility.”
—*Annals*, xiv. 44.

successful in the management of affairs, and the elevated and exquisite opinions of philosophy unfit for business. This sharp vivacity of soul, and the supple and restless volubility attending it, disturb our negotiations. We are to manage human enterprises more superficially and roughly, and leave a great part to fortune ; it is not necessary to examine affairs with so much subtlety and so deep : a man loses himself in the consideration of many contrary lustres, and so many various forms :—

“ *Volutantibus res inter se pugnantes, obtorpuerunt . . . animi.* ”¹

’Tis what the ancients say of Simonides, that by reason his imagination suggested to him, upon the question King Hiero had put to him² (to answer which he had had many days for thought), several sharp and subtle considerations, whilst he doubted which was the most likely, he totally despaired of the truth.

He who dives into and in his inquisition comprehends all circumstances and consequences, hinders his election . a little engine well handled is sufficient for executions, whether of less or greater weight. The best managers are those who can worst give account how they are so ; while the greatest talkers, for the most part, do nothing to purpose ; I know one of this sort of men, and a most excellent discourser upon all sorts of good husbandry, who has miserably let a hundred thousand *livres*³ yearly revenue slip through his hands ; I know another who talks, who better advises than any man of his counsel, and there is not in the world a fairer show of soul and

¹ “ Whilst they considered of things so indifferent in themselves, they were astonished, and knew not what to do ”—Livy, xxxii. 20.

² What God was —Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, i. 22.

³ 100,000 *livres* = 100,000 *francs*

understanding than he has; nevertheless, when he comes to the test, his servants find him quite another thing; not to make any mention of his misfortunes.

CHAPTER XXI

AGAINST IDLENESS

THE Emperor Vespasian, being sick of the disease whereof he died, did not for all that neglect to inquire after the state of the empire, and even in bed continually despatched very many affairs of great consequence; for which, being reproved by his physician, as a thing prejudicial to his health, "An emperor," said he, "must die standing."¹ A fine saying, in my opinion, and worthy a great prince. The Emperor Adrian since made use of the same words,² and kings should be often put in mind of them, to make them know that the great office conferred upon them of the command of so many men, is not an employment of ease; and that there is nothing can so justly disgust a subject, and make him unwilling to expose himself to labour and danger for the service of his prince, than to see him, in the meantime, devoted to his ease and frivolous amusement, and to be solicitous of his preservation who so much neglects that of his people.

Whoever will take upon him to maintain that 'tis better for a prince to carry on his wars by others, than in his own person, fortune will furnish him with examples enough of those whose lieutenants have brought great enterprises to a happy issue, and of those also whose presence has done more

¹ Suetonius, *in Vesp.* c. 24.

² Spartan, *Life of Aelius Verus*, c. 6.

hurt than good: but no virtuous and valiant prince can with patience endure so dishonourable councils. Under colour of saving his head, like the statue of a saint, for the happiness of his kingdom, they degrade him from and declare him incapable of his office, which is military throughout. I know one¹ who had much rather be beaten, than to sleep whilst another fights for him; and who never without jealousy heard of any brave thing done even by his own officers in his absence. And Soliman I. said, with very good reason, in my opinion, that victories obtained without the master were never complete. Much more would he have said that that master ought to blush for shame, to pretend to any share in the honour, having contributed nothing to the work, but his voice and thought; nor even so much as these, considering that in such work as that, the direction and command that deserve honour are only such as are given upon the spot, and in the heat of the business. No pilot performs his office by standing still. The princes of the Ottoman family, the chiefest in the world in military fortune, have warmly embraced this opinion, and Bajazet II., with his son, who swerved from it, spending their time in science and other retired employments, gave great blows to their empire; and Amurath III., now reigning, following their example, begins to find the same. Was it not Edward III., King of England, who said this of our Charles V.: "There never was king who so seldom put on his armour, and yet never king who gave me so much to do." He had reason to think it strange, as an effect of chance more than of reason. And let those seek out some other to join with them than me, who will reckon the Kings of

¹ Probably Henry IV.

Castile and Portugal amongst the warlike and magnanimous conquerors, because at the distance of twelve hundred leagues from their lazy abode, by the conduct of their captains, they made themselves masters of both Indies; of which it has to be known if they would have had even the courage to go and in person enjoy them.

The Emperor Julian said yet further, that a philosopher and a brave man ought not so much as to breathe; that is to say, not to allow any more to bodily necessities than what we cannot refuse; keeping the soul and body still intent and busy about honourable, great, and virtuous things. He was ashamed if any one in public saw him spit, or sweat (which is said by some, also, of the Lacedæmonian young men, and which Xenophon says of the Persian¹), forasmuch as he conceived that exercise, continual labour, and sobriety, ought to have dried up all those superfluities. What Seneca says² will not be unfit for this place; which is, that the ancient Romans kept their youth always standing, and taught them nothing that they were to learn sitting.

'Tis a generous desire to wish to die usefully and like a man, but the effect lies not so much in our resolution as in our good fortune, a thousand have proposed to themselves in battle, either to overcome or to die, who have failed both in the one and the other, wounds and imprisonment crossing their design and compelling them to live against their will. There are diseases that overthrow even our desires, and our knowledge. Fortune ought not to second the vanity of the Roman legions, who bound themselves by oath, either to overcome or die:—

¹ *Cyropaedia*, i. 2, 16

² *Ep.*, 88.

“Victor, Marce Fabi, revertar ex acie · si fallo, Jovem patrem,
Gradivumque Martem aliosque iratos invoco deos.”¹

The Portuguese say that in a certain place of their conquest of the Indies, they met with soldiers who had condemned themselves, with horrible execrations, to enter into no other composition but either to cause themselves to be slain, or to remain victorious, and had their heads and beards shaved in token of this vow. 'Tis to much purpose for us to hazard ourselves and to be obstinate: it seems as if blows avoided those who present themselves too briskly to them, and do not willingly fall upon those who too willingly seek them, and so defeat them of their design. Such there have been, who, after having tried all ways, not having been able with all their endeavour to obtain the favour of dying by the hand of the enemy, have been constrained, to make good their resolution of bringing home the honour of victory or of losing their lives, to kill themselves even in the heat of battle. Of which there are other examples, but this is one: Philistus, general of the naval army of Dionysius the younger against the Syracusans, presented them battle, which was sharply disputed, their forces being equal: in this engagement, he had the better at the first, through his own valour: but the Syracusans drawing about his gally to environ him, after having done great things in his own person to disengage himself and hoping for no relief, with his own hand he took away the life he had so liberally, and in vain, exposed to the enemy.²

Muley Moloch, king of Fez, who lately won

¹ “I will return, Marcus Fabius, a conqueror, from the fight: and if I fail, I invoke Father Jove, Mars Gradivus, and the other angry gods”—Livy, ii. 45.

² Plutarch, *Life of Dionysius*, c. 8.

against Sebastian, king of Portugal, the battle so famous for the death of three kings, and for the transmission of that great kingdom to the crown of Castile, was extremely sick when the Portuguese entered in an hostile manner into his dominions ; and from that day forward grew worse and worse, still drawing nearer to and foreseeing his end , yet never did man better employ his own sufficiency more vigorously and bravely than he did upon this occasion. He found himself too weak to undergo the pomp and ceremony of entering into his camp, which after their manner is very magnificent, and therefore resigned that honour to his brother ; but this was all of the office of a general that he resigned ; all the rest of greatest utility and necessity he most exactly and gloriously performed in his own person ; his body lying upon a couch, but his judgment and courage upright and firm to his last gasp, and in some sort beyond it. He might have wasted his enemy, indiscreetly advanced into his dominions, without striking a blow ; and it was a very unhappy occurrence, that for want of a little life or somebody to substitute in the conduct of this war and the affairs of a troubled state, he was compelled to seek a doubtful and bloody victory, having another by a better and surer way already in his hands. Notwithstanding, he wonderfully managed the continuance of his sickness in consuming the enemy, and in drawing them far from the assistance of the navy and the ports they had on the coast of Africa, even till the last day of his life, which he designedly reserved for this great battle. He arranged his battalia in a circular form, environing the Portuguese army on every side, which round circle coming to close in and to draw up close together, not only hindered them in the conflict (which was very sharp

through the valour of the young invading king), considering that they had every way to present a front, but prevented their flight after the defeat, so that finding all passages possessed and shut up by the enemy, they were constrained to close up together again:—

"Coacerventurque non solum cæde, sed etiam fuga,"¹

and there they were slain in heaps upon one another, leaving to the conqueror a very bloody and entire victory. Dying, he caused himself to be carried and hurried from place to place where most need was, and passing along the files, encouraged the captains and soldiers one after another; but a corner of his main battalia being broken, he was not to be held from mounting on horseback with his sword in his hand; he did his utmost to break from those about him, and to rush into the thickest of the battle, they all the while withholding him, some by the bridle, some by his robe, and others by his stirrups. This last effort totally overwhelmed the little life he had left; they again laid him upon his bed; but coming to himself, and starting as it were out of his swoon, all other faculties failing, to give his people notice that they were to conceal his death (the most necessary command he had then to give, that his soldiers might not be discouraged with the news) he expired with his finger upon his mouth, the ordinary sign of keeping silence. Who ever lived so long and so far into death? whoever died so erect, or more like a man?

The most extreme degree of courageously treating death, and the most natural, is to look upon it not only without astonishment but without care,

¹ "They are heaped up not only in slaughter but in flight"

continuing the wonted course of life even into it, as Cato did, who entertained himself in study, and went to sleep, having a violent and bloody death in his heart, and the weapon in his hand with which he was resolved to despatch himself.

CHAPTER XXII

OF POSTING

I HAVE been none of the least able in this exercise, which is proper for men of my pitch, well-knit and short; but I give it over; it shakes us too much to continue it long. I was at this moment reading,¹ that King Cyrus, the better to have news brought him from all parts of the empire, which was of a vast extent, caused it to be tried how far a horse could go in a day without baiting, and at that distance appointed men, whose business it was to have horses always in readiness, to mount those who were despatched to him; and some say, that this swift way of posting is equal to that of the flight of cranes.

Cæsar says,² that Lucius Vibullius Rufus, being in great haste to carry intelligence to Pompey, rode night and day, still taking fresh horses for the greater diligence and speed, and he himself, as Suetonius reports,³ travelled a hundred miles a day in a hired coach; but he was a furious courier, for where the rivers stopped his way he passed them by swimming, without turning out of his way to look for either bridge or ford. Tiberius Nero, going to see his brother Drusus, who was

¹ Xenoph, *Cyrop.*, viii. 6, 9

² *In Vidd*, c 57.

³ *Bell. Civ.*, iii 11.

sick in Germany, travelled two hundred miles in four-and-twenty hours, having three coaches.¹ In the war of the Romans against King Antiochus, T. Sempronius Gracchus, says Livy:—

“*Per dispositos equos prope incredibili celentate ab Amphissa tertio die Pellam pervenit.*”²

And it appears that they were established posts, and not horses purposely laid in upon this occasion.

Cecina's invention to send back news to his family was much more quick, for he took swallows along with him from home, and turned them out towards their nests when he would send back any news; setting a mark of some colour upon them to signify his meaning, according to what he and his people had before agreed upon.³

At the theatre at Rome masters of families carried pigeons in their bosoms to which they tied letters when they had a mind to send any orders to their people at home; and the pigeons were trained up to bring back an answer. D. Brutus made use of the same device when besieged in Modena,⁴ and others elsewhere have done the same.

In Peru they rode post upon men, who took them upon their shoulders in a certain kind of litters made for that purpose, and ran with such agility that, in their full speed, the first couriers transferred their load to the second without making any stop.

I understand that the Wallachians, the grand Signior's couriers, perform wonderful journeys, by reason they have liberty to dismount the first

¹ Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, vii. 20.

² “By pre-arranged relays of horses, he, with an almost incredible speed, rode in three days from Amphissa to Pella”—Livy, xxxvii. 7

³ Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, x. 24

⁴ *Idem, ibid.*, 77.

person they meet upon the road, giving him their own tired horses ; and that to preserve themselves from being weary, they gird themselves straight about the middle with a broad girdle ; but I could never find any benefit from this.

CHAPTER XXIII

OF ILL MEANS EMPLOYED TO A GOOD END

THERE is wonderful relation and correspondence in this universal government of the works of nature, which very well makes it appear that it is neither accidental nor carried on by divers masters. The diseases and conditions of our bodies are, in like manner, manifest in states and governments ; kingdoms and republics are founded, flourish, and decay with age as we do. We are subject to a repletion of humours, useless and dangerous : whether of those that are good (for even those the physicians are afraid of ; and seeing we have nothing in us that is stable, they say that a too brisk and vigorous perfection of health must be abated by art, lest our nature, unable to rest in any certain condition, and not having whither to rise to mend itself, make too sudden and too disorderly a retreat ; and therefore prescribe wrestlers to purge and bleed, to qualify that superabundant health), or else a repletion of evil humours, which is the ordinary cause of sickness. States are very often sick of the like repletion, and various sorts of purgations have commonly been applied. Sometimes a great multitude of families are turned out to clear the country, who seek out new abodes elsewhere and encroach upon others. After this

manner our ancient Franks came from the remotest part of Germany to seize upon Gaul, and to drive thence the first inhabitants; so was that infinite deluge of men made up who came into Italy under the conduct of Brennus and others; so the Goths and Vandals, and also the people who now possess Greece, left their native country to go settle elsewhere, where they might have more room; and there are scarce two or three little corners in the world that have not felt the effect of such removals. The Romans by this means erected their colonies; for, perceiving their city to grow immeasurably populous, they eased it of the most unnecessary people, and sent them to inhabit and cultivate the lands conquered by them; sometimes also they purposely maintained wars with some of their enemies, not only to keep their own men in action, for fear lest idleness, the mother of corruption, should bring upon them some worse inconvenience:—

“*Et patimur longæ pacis mala; sævior armis
Luxuria incubuit*”¹—

but also to serve for a blood-letting to their Republic, and a little to evaporate the too vehement heat of their youth, to prune and clear the branches from the stock too luxuriant in wood; and to this end it was that they maintained so long a war with Carthage.

In the treaty of Bretigny, Edward III., king of England, would not, in the general peace he then made with our king, comprehend the controversy about the Duchy of Brittany, that he might have a place wherein to discharge himself

¹ “And we suffer the ills of a long peace; luxury is more pernicious than war.”—Juvenal, vi. 291

of his soldiers, and that the vast number of English he had brought over to serve him in his expedition here might not return back into England. And this also was one reason why our King Philip consented to send his son John upon a foreign expedition, that he might take along with him a great number of hot young men who were then in his pay.

There are many in our times who talk at this rate, wishing that this hot emotion that is now amongst us might discharge itself in some neighbouring war, for fear lest all the peccant humours that now reign in this politic body of ours may diffuse themselves farther, keep the fever still in the height, and at last cause our total ruin, and, in truth, a foreign is much more supportable than a civil war; but I do not believe that God will favour so unjust a design as to offend and quarrel with others for our own advantage:—

“Nil mihi tam valde placeat, Rhamnusia virgo,
Quod temere invitè suscipiatur heris.”¹

And yet the weakness of our condition often pushes us upon the necessity of making use of ill means to a good end. Lycurgus, the most virtuous and perfect legislator that ever was, invented this very unjust practice of making the Helots, who were their slaves, drunk by force, to the end that the Spartans, seeing them so lost and buried in wine, might abhor the excess of this vice.² And yet those were still more to blame who of old gave leave that criminals, to what sort of death soever condemned, should

¹ “Rhamnusian virgin, let nothing ever so greatly please me which is taken without justice from the unwilling owners”—Catullus, lxviii 77.

² Plutarch, in *Vita*, c. 21.

be cut up alive by the physicians, that they might make a true discovery of our inward parts, and build their art upon greater certainty; for, if we must run into excesses, it is more excusable to do it for the health of the soul than that of the body; as the Romans trained up the people to valour and the contempt of dangers and death by those furious spectacles of gladiators and fencers, who, having to fight it out to the last, cut, mangled, and killed one another in their presence:—

“Quid vesani ahud sibi vult ars impia ludi,
Quid mortes juvenum, quid sanguine pasta voluptas?”¹

and this custom continued till the Emperor Theodosius’ time:—

“Arripe dilatam tua, dux, in tempora famam,
Quodque patris superest, successor laudis habeto
Nullus in urbe cadat, cuius sit poena voluptas
Jam solis contenta feris, infamis arena
Nulla cruentatis homicidia ludat in armis”²

It was, in truth, a wonderful example, and of great advantage for the training up the people, to see every day before their eyes a hundred, two hundred, nay, a thousand couples of men armed against one another, cut one another to pieces with so great a constancy of courage, that they were never heard to utter so much as one syllable of weakness or commiseration; never seen to turn their backs, nor so much as to make one cowardly step to evade a blow, but rather exposed their necks to the adversary’s sword and presented themselves

¹ “What other end does the impious art of the gladiators propose to itself, what the slaughter of young men, what pleasure fed with blood”—Prudentius, *Contra Symmachum*, ii. 643

² “Prince, take the honours delayed for thy reign, and be successor to thy fathers; henceforth let none at Rome be slain for sport. Let beasts’ blood stain the infamous arena, and no more homicides be there acted”—Prudentius, *Contra Symmachum*, ii. 643

BOOK II. *Of Ill Means employed, &c.*

to receive the stroke; and many of them, when wounded to death, have sent to ask the spectators if they were satisfied with their behaviour, before they lay down to die upon the place. It was not enough for them to fight and to die bravely, but cheerfully too; insomuch that they were hissed and cursed if they made any hesitation about receiving their death. The very girls themselves set them on:—

“*Consurgit ad ictus,
Et, quoties victor ferrum jugulo insertit, illa
Delicias ait esse suas, pectusque jacentis
Virgo modesta jubet converso pollice rumpi.*”¹

The first Romans only condemned criminals to this example: but they afterwards employed innocent slaves in the work, and even freemen too, who sold themselves to this purpose, nay, moreover, senators and knights of Rome, and also women:—

“*Nunc caput in mortem vendunt, et funus arenæ,
Atque hostem sibi quisque parat, cum bella quiescunt*”²

“*Hos inter fremitus novosque lusus
Stat sexus rufis insciusque ferri,
Et pugnas capit improbus viriles*”³,

which I should think strange and incredible, if we were not accustomed every day to see in our own wars many thousands of men of other nations, for money to stake their blood and their lives in quarrels wherein they have no manner of concern.

¹ “The modest virgin is so delighted with the sport, that she applauds the blow, and when the victor bathes his sword in his fellow's throat, she says it is her pleasure, and with turned thumb orders him to rip up the bosom of the prostrate victim”—Prudentius, *Contra Symmachum*, ii. 617

² “They sell themselves to death and the circus, and, since the wars are ceased, each for himself a foe prepares”—Manilius, *Astron.*, iv. 225.

³ “Amidst these tumults and new sports, the tender sex, unskilled in arms, immodestly engaged in manly fights”—Statius, *Sylv.*, i. 6, 51.

CHAPTER XXIV

OF THE ROMAN GREATNESS

I WILL only say a word or two of this infinite argument, to show the simplicity of those who compare the pitiful greatness of these times with that of Rome. In the seventh book of Cicero's *Familiar Epistles* (and let the grammarians put out that surname of *familiar* if they please, for in truth it is not very suitable; and they who, instead of *familiar*, have substituted "*ad Familiares*," may gather something to justify them for so doing out of what Suetonius says in the *Life of Cæsar*,¹ that there was a volume of letters of his "*ad Familiares*") there is one² directed to Cæsar, then in Gaul, wherein Cicero repeats these words, which were in the end of another letter that Cæsar had written to him: "As to what concerns Marcus Furius, whom you have recommended to me, I will make him king of Gaul, and if you would have me advance any other friend of yours send him to me." It was no new thing for a simple citizen of Rome, as Cæsar then was, to dispose of kingdoms, for he took away that of King Deiotarus from him to give it to a gentleman of the city of Pergamus, called Mithridates³; and they who wrote his *Life* record several cities sold by him; and Suetonius says,⁴ that he had once from King Ptolemy three millions and six hundred thousand crowns, which was very like selling him his own kingdom:—

"Tot Galatæ, tot Pontus, tot Lydia, nummis."⁵

¹ c. 56.

² Cicero, *Ep. Fam.*, vii. 5.

³ Idem, *De Divin.*, ii. 37

⁴ *In Vttd.*, c. 54

⁵ "So much for Galatia, so much for Pontus, so much for Lydia."—*Claudius in Eutrop.*, i. 203.

Marcus Antonius said,¹ that the greatness of the people of Rome was not so much seen in what they took, as in what they gave; and, indeed, some ages before Antonius, they had dethroned one amongst the rest with so wonderful authority, that in all the Roman history I have not observed anything that more denotes the height of their power. Antiochus possessed all Egypt, and was, moreover, ready to conquer Cyprus and other appendages of that empire: when being upon the progress of his victories, C. Popilius came to him from the Senate, and at their first meeting refused to take him by the hand, till he had first read his letters, which after the king had read, and told him he would consider of them, Popilius made a circle about him with his cane, saying:—"Return me an answer, that I may carry it back to the Senate, before thou stirrest out of this circle." Antiochus, astonished at the roughness of so positive a command, after a little pause, replied, "I will obey the Senate's command." Then Popilius saluted him as friend of the Roman people.² To have renounced claim to so great a monarchy, and a course of such successful fortune, from the effects of three lines in writing!¹ Truly he had reason, as he afterwards did, to send the Senate word by his ambassadors, that he had received their order with the same respect as if it had come from the immortal gods.

All the kingdoms that Augustus gained by the right of war, he either restored to those who had lost them or presented them to strangers. And Tacitus, in reference to this, speaking of Cogidunus, king of England, gives us, by a marvellous touch, an instance of that infinite power: the Romans,

¹ Plutarch's *Life of Antony*, c 8

² Livy, xlv. 12.

says he, were from all antiquity accustomed to leave the kings they had subdued in possession of their kingdoms under their authority:—

“ *Ut haberent instrumenta servitutis et reges.*”¹

‘Tis probable that Solyman, whom we have seen make a gift of Hungary and other principalities, had therein more respect to this consideration than to that he was wont to allege, viz., that he was glutted and overcharged with so many monarchies and so much dominion, as his own valour and that of his ancestors had acquired.

CHAPTER XXV

NOT TO COUNTERFEIT THE SICK MAN

THERE is an epigram in Martial, and one of the very good ones—for he has of all sorts—where he pleasantly tells the story of Cælius, who, to avoid making his court to some great men of Rome, to wait their rising, and to attend them abroad, pretended to have the gout; and the better to colour this anointed his legs, and had them lapped up in a great many swathings, and perfectly counterfeited both the gesture and countenance of a gouty person; till in the end, Fortune did him the kindness to make him one indeed:—

“ *Quantum cura potest et ars doloris !
Desut fingere Cælius podagram* ”²

¹ “ That they might have even kings as instruments of subjugation.”—Livy, xiv. 13.

² “ How great is the power of counterfeiting pain Cælius has ceased to feign the gout.”—Martial, *Ep.*, vii. 39, 8

I think I have read somewhere in Appian¹ a story like this, of one who to escape the proscriptions of the triumvirs of Rome, and the better to be concealed from the discovery of those who pursued him, having hidden himself in a disguise, would yet add this invention, to counterfeit having but one eye; but when he came to have a little more liberty, and went to take off the plaster he had a great while worn over his eye, he found he had totally lost the sight of it indeed, and that it was absolutely gone. 'Tis possible that the action of sight was dulled from having been so long without exercise, and that the optic power was wholly retired into the other eye: for we evidently perceive that the eye we keep shut sends some part of its virtue to its fellow, so that it will swell and grow bigger; and so inaction, with the heat of ligatures and plaisters, might very well have brought some gouty humour upon the counterfeiter in Martial.

Reading in Froissart the vow of a troop of young English gentlemen, to keep their left eyes bound up till they had arrived in France and performed some notable exploit upon us, I have often been tickled with this thought, that it might have befallen them as it did those others, and they might have returned with but an eye a-piece to their mistresses, for whose sakes they had entered on the enterprise.

Mothers have reason to rebuke their children when they counterfeit having but one eye, squinting, lameness, or any other personal defect; for, besides that their bodies being then so tender, may be subject to take an ill bent, fortune, I know not how, sometimes seems to delight in taking us at our word; and I have heard several examples related of people who have become really sick, by only

¹ *Bell Civil.*, iv.

feigning to be so. I have always used, whether on horseback or on foot, to carry a stick in my hand, and even to affect doing it with an elegant air; many have threatened that this fancy would one day be turned into necessity. if so, I should be the first of my family to have the gout.

But let us a little lengthen this chapter, and add another anecdote concerning blindness. Pliny reports¹ of one who, dreaming he was blind, found himself so indeed in the morning without any preceding infirmity in his eyes. The force of imagination might assist in this case, as I have said elsewhere,² and Pliny seems to be of the same opinion; but it is more likely that the motions which the body felt within, of which physicians, if they please, may find out the cause, taking away his sight, were the occasion of his dream.

Let us add another story, not very improper for this subject, which Seneca relates in one of his epistles³: "You know," says he, writing to Lucilius, "that Harpastes, my wife's fool, is thrown upon me as an hereditary charge, for I have naturally an aversion to those monsters; and if I have a mind to laugh at a fool, I need not seek him far; I can laugh at myself. This fool has suddenly lost her sight: I tell you a strange, but a very true thing: she is not sensible that she is blind, but eternally importunes her keeper to take her abroad, because she says the house is dark. That what we laugh at in her, I pray you to believe, happens to every one of us: no one knows himself to be avaricious or grasping; and, again, the blind call for a guide, while we stray of our own accord. I am not ambitious, we say; but a man cannot live otherwise at Rome; I am not wasteful, but the city requires

¹ *Nat. Hist.*, vii. 50.

² Book i., c. 20.

³ *Ep.*, 50.

a great outlay ; 'tis not my fault if I am choleric—if I have not yet established any certain course of life : 'tis the fault of youth. Let us not seek our disease out of ourselves ; 'tis in us, and planted in our bowels ; and the mere fact that we do not perceive ourselves to be sick, renders us more hard to be cured. If we do not betimes begin to see to ourselves, when shall we have provided for so many wounds and evils wherewith we abound? And yet we have a most sweet and charming medicine in philosophy ; for of all the rest we are sensible of no pleasure till after the cure : this pleases and heals at once." This is what Seneca says, that has carried me from my subject, but there is advantage in the change.

CHAPTER XXVI

OF THUMBS

TACITUS reports,¹ that amongst certain barbarian kings their manner was, when they would make a firm obligation, to join their right hands close to one another, and intertwist their thumbs ; and when, by force of straining the blood, it appeared in the ends, they lightly pricked them with some sharp instrument, and mutually sucked them.

Physicians say that the thumbs are the master fingers of the hand, and that their Latin etymology is derived from "pollere."² The Greeks called them *Αυτίχειρ*, as who should say, another hand. And it seems that the Latins also sometimes take it in this sense for the whole hand :—

¹ *Annal.*, xii. 47.

² To be powerful. This seems taken from Macrobius, *Saturn.*, vii. 13, who took it in his turn from Atticus Capito.—Coste.

“Sed nec vocibus excitata blandis,
Mollis pollici nec rogata, surgit.”¹

It was at Rome a signification of favour to depress and turn in the thumbs:—

“Fautor utroque tuum laudabit pollice ludum”:²

and of disfavour to elevate and thrust them outward:—

“Converso pollice vulgi,
Quemlibet occidunt populariter.”³

The Romans exempted from war all such as were maimed in the thumbs, as having no more sufficient strength to hold their weapons. Augustus confiscated the estate of a Roman knight who had maliciously cut off the thumbs of two young children he had, to excuse them from going into the armies⁴: and, before him, the Senate, in the time of the Italic war, had condemned Caius Vatienus to perpetual imprisonment, and confiscated all his goods, for having purposely cut off the thumb of his left hand, to exempt himself from that expedition.⁵ Some one, I have forgotten who,⁶ having won a naval battle, cut off the thumbs of all his vanquished enemies, to render them incapable of fighting and of handling the oar. The Athenians also caused

¹ “Neither to be excited by soft words or by the thumb”—Mart., XII. 98, 8.

² “Thy patron will applaud thy sport with both thumbs”—Horace, *Eph.*, I. 18, 16.

³ “The populace, with inverted thumbs, kill all that come before them”—Juvenal, III. 36. We have elsewhere noticed that to turn the thumbs inwards was a signal in the circus for the death of the defeated gladiator.

⁴ Suetonius, *in Vitia*, c. 24.

⁵ Valerius Maximus, v. 3, 8. From “Pollice truncus” comes, it is thought, *poltroon*—*Le Clerc*.

⁶ Philocles, one of the Athenian generals in the Peloponnesian war.—*Idem*.

the thumbs of the Æginetans to be cut off, to deprive them of the superiority in the art of navigation.¹

In Lacedæmon, pedagogues chastised their scholars by biting their thumbs.²

CHAPTER XXVII

COWARDICE THE MOTHER OF CRUELTY

I HAVE often heard it said that cowardice is the mother of cruelty; and I have found by experience that malicious and inhuman animosity and fierceness are usually accompanied with feminine weakness. I have seen the most cruel people, and upon frivolous occasions, apt to cry. Alexander, the tyrant of Pheres, durst not be a spectator of tragedies in the theatre, for fear lest his citizens should see him weep at the misfortunes of Hecuba and Andromache, who himself without pity caused so many people every day to be murdered.³ Is it not meanness of spirit that renders them so pliable to all extremities? Valour, whose effect is only to be exercised against resistance.—

“*Nec nisi bellantis gaudet cervice juvencū*”⁴—

stops when it sees the enemy at its mercy; but pusillanimity, to say that it was also in the game, not having dared to meddle in the first act of danger, takes as its part the second, of blood and massacre. The murders in victories are commonly performed

¹ Valerius Maximus, ix. 2, Ext 8; Cicero, *De Offic*, iii. 11

² Plutarch, *Life of Lycurgus*, c. 14.

³ Plutarch, *Life of Pelopidas*, c. 15.

⁴ “Nor delights in killing a bull unless he resists”—Claudius, *Ep. ad Hadrianum*, v. 39.

by the rascality and hangers-on of an army, and that which causes so many unheard of cruelties in domestic wars is, that this *canaille* makes war in imbruining itself up to the elbows in blood, and ripping up a body that lies prostrate at its feet, having no sense of any other valour :—

“ *Et lupus, et turpes instant morientibus ursi,
Et quæcunque minor nobilitate fera est* ”¹ :

like cowardly dogs, that in the house worry and tear the skins of wild beasts, they durst not come near in the field. What is it in these times of ours that makes our quarrels mortal ; and that, whereas our fathers had some degrees of revenge, we now begin with the last in ours, and at the first meeting nothing is to be said but, kill ? What is this but cowardice ?

Every one is sensible that there is more bravery and disdain in subduing an enemy, than in cutting his throat ; and in making him yield, than in putting him to the sword. besides that the appetite of revenge is better satisfied and pleased because its only aim is to make itself felt. And this is the reason why we do not fall upon a beast or a stone when they hurt us, because they are not capable of being sensible of our revenge ; and to kill a man is to save him from the injury and offence we intend him. And as Bias cried out to a wicked fellow, “ I know that sooner or later thou wilt have thy reward, but I am afraid I shall not see it ”² ; and pitied the Orchomenians that the penitence of Lyciscus for the treason committed against them, came at a season when

¹ “ *Wolves and the filthy bears, and all the baser beasts, fall upon the dying.* ”—Ovid, *Trist.*, III. 5, 35.

² Plutarch, *On the Delay in Divine Justice*, c. 2.

there was no one remaining alive of those who had been interested in the offence, and whom the pleasure of this penitence should affect¹: so revenge is to be pitied, when the person on whom it is executed is deprived of means of suffering under it: for as the avenger will look on to enjoy the pleasure of his revenge, so the person on whom he takes revenge should be a spectator too, to be afflicted and to repent. "He will repent it," we say, and because we have given him a pistol-shot through the head, do we imagine he will repent? On the contrary, if we but observe, we shall find, that he makes mouths at us in falling, and is so far from penitency, that he does not so much as repine at us; and we do him the kindest office of life, which is to make him die insensibly, and soon: we are afterwards to hide ourselves, and to shift and fly from the officers of justice, who pursue us, whilst he is at rest. Killing is good to frustrate an offence to come, not to revenge one that is already past; and more an act of fear than of bravery, of precaution than of courage; of defence than of enterprise. It is manifest that by it we lose both the true end of revenge and the care of our reputation; we are afraid, if he lives he will do us another injury as great as the first; 'tis not out of animosity to him, but care of thyself, that thou gettest rid of him.

In the kingdom of Narsingah this expedient would be useless to us, where not only soldiers, but tradesmen also, end their differences by the sword. The king never denies the field to any who wish to fight; and when they are persons of quality, he looks on, rewarding the victor

¹ It is not Bias who pitied the Orchomenians, but Patroclus, one of the other interlocutors in the dialogue.

with a chain of gold, for which any one who pleases may fight with him again, so that, by having come off from one combat, he has engaged himself in many.

If we thought by virtue to be always masters of our enemies, and to triumph over them at pleasure, we should be sorry they should escape from us as they do, by dying: but we have a mind to conquer, more with safety than honour, and, in our quarrel, more pursue the end than the glory.

Asinius Pollio, who, as being a worthy man, was the less to be excused, committed a like error, when, having written a libel against Plancus, he forbore to publish it till he was dead; which is to bite one's thumb at a blind man, to rail at one who is deaf, to wound a man who has no feeling, rather than to run the hazard of his resentment. And it was also said of him that it was only for hobgoblins to wrestle with the dead.

He who stays to see the author die, whose writings he intends to question, what does he say but that he is weak in his aggressiveness? It was told to Aristotle that some one had spoken ill of him: "Let him do more," said he¹; "let him whip me too, provided I am not there."

Our fathers contented themselves with revenging an insult with the lie, the lie with a box of the ear, and so forward; they were valiant enough not to fear their adversaries, living and provoked: we tremble for fear so soon as we see them on foot. And that this is so, does not our noble practice of these days, equally to prosecute to death both him that has offended us and him we have offended, make it out? 'Tis also a kind

¹ Diogenes Laertius, xi. 18

of cowardice that has introduced the custom of having seconds, thirds, and fourths in our duels ; they were formerly duels ; they are now skirmishes, rencontres, and battles. Solitude was, doubtless, terrible to those who were the first inventors of this practice :—

“Quum in se cuique minimum fiduciae esset”¹ ;

for naturally any company whatever is consolatory in danger. Third persons were formerly called in to prevent disorder and foul play only, and to be witness of the fortune of the combat ; but now they have brought it to this pass that the witnesses themselves engage, whoever is invited cannot handsomely stand by as an idle spectator, for fear of being suspected either of want of affection or of courage. Besides the injustice and unworthiness of such an action, of engaging other strength and valour in the protection of your honour than your own, I conceive it a disadvantage to a brave man, and who wholly relies upon himself, to shuffle his fortune with that of a second ; every one runs hazard enough himself without hazarding for another, and has enough to do to assure himself in his own valour for the defence of his life, without intrusting a thing so dear in a third man’s hand. For, if it be not expressly agreed upon before to the contrary, ‘tis a combined party of all four, and if your second be killed, you have two to deal withal, with good reason ; and to say that it is foul play, it is so indeed, as it is, well armed, to attack a man who has but the hilt of a broken sword in his hand, or, clear and untouched, a man who is desperately wounded : but if these be advantages

¹ “Since they the least possible confidence had in each other.”

you have got by fighting, you may make use of them without reproach. The disparity and inequality are only weighed and considered from the condition of the combatants when they began; as to the rest, you must take your chance: and though you had, alone, three enemies upon you at once, your two companions being killed, you have no more wrong done you, than I should do in a battle, by running a man through whom I should see engaged with one of our own men, with the like advantage. The nature of society will have it so that where there is troop against troop, as where our Duke of Orleans challenged Henry, king of England, a hundred against a hundred; three hundred against as many, as the Argians against the Lacedæmonians; three to three, as the Horatii against the Curiatii, the multitude on either side is considered but as one single man: the hazard, wherever there is company, being confused and mixed.

I have a domestic interest in this discourse; for my brother, the Sieur de Mattecoulon,¹ was at Rome asked by a gentleman with whom he had no great acquaintance, and who was a defendant challenged by another, to be his second; in this duel he found himself matched with a gentleman much better known to him. (I would fain have an explanation of these rules of honour, which so often shock and confound those of reason.) After having despatched his man, seeing the two principals still on foot and sound, he ran in to disengage his friend. What could he do less? should he have stood still, and if chance would have ordered it so, have seen him he was come

¹ One of the companions of Montaigne in his Italian tour in 1580-1. The two were related to each other

thither to defend killed before his face? what he had hitherto done helped not the business; the quarrel was yet undecided. The courtesy that you can, and certainly ought to shew to your enemy, when you have reduced him to an ill condition and have a great advantage over him, I do not see how you can do it, where the interest of another is concerned, where you are only called in as an assistant, and the quarrel is none of yours: he could neither be just nor courteous, at the hazard of him he was there to serve. And he was therefore enlarged from the prisons of Italy at the speedy and solemn request of our king. Indiscreet nation! we are not content to make our vices and follies known to the world by report only, but we must go into foreign countries, there to show them what fools we are. Put three Frenchmen into the deserts of Libya, they will not live a month together without fighting; so that you would say this peregrination were a thing purposely designed to give foreigners the pleasure of our tragedies, and, for the most part, to such as rejoice and laugh at our miseries. We go into Italy to learn to fence, and exercise the art at the expense of our lives before we have learned it; and yet, by the rule of discipline, we should put the theory before the practice. We betray our apprenticeship:—

“Primitiae juvenis misere, bellique propinqui
Dura rudimenta.”¹

I know that fencing is an art very useful to its end (in a duel betwixt two princes, cousin-germans, in Spain, the elder, says Livy,² by his skill and

¹ “Wretched the elementary trials of youth, and hard the rudiments of approaching war”—Virgil, *Aeneid*, xi. 156.

² xxviii. 21

dexterity in arms, easily overcoming the greater and more awkward strength of the younger), and of which the knowledge, as I experimentally know, has inspired some with courage above their natural measure ; but this is not properly valour, because it supports itself upon address, and is founded upon something besides itself. The honour of combat consists in the jealousy of courage, and not of skill ; and therefore I have known a friend of mine, famed as a great master in this exercise, in his quarrels make choice of such arms as might deprive him of this advantage and that wholly depended upon fortune and assurance, that they might not attribute his victory rather to his skill in fencing than his valour. When I was young, gentlemen avoided the reputation of good fencers as injurious to them, and learned to fence with all imaginable privacy as a trade of subtlety, derogating from true and natural valour :—

“ Non schivar non parar, non ritirarsi,
Voglion costor, ne qui destrezza ha parte ;
Non danno i colpi or finti, or pieni, or scarsi !
Toglie l’ira e il furor l’uso de l’arte.
Odi le spade orribilmente utarsi
A mezzo il ferro, il pie d’orma non parte,
Sempre è il pie fermo, è la man sempre in moto,
Ne scende taglio in van, ne punta à voto.”¹

Butts, tilting, and barriers, the feint of warlike fights, were the exercises of our forefathers : this other exercise is so much the less noble, as it only

¹ “ They neither shrank, nor vantage sought of ground,
They travers’d not, nor skipt from part to part,
Their blows were neither false, nor feign’d found
In fight, their rage would let them use no art.
Their swords together clash with dreadful sound,
Their feet stand fast, and neither stir nor start,
They move their hands, steadfast their feet remain
Nor blow nor foin they strook, or thrust in vain ”
—Tasso, *Gierus. Lib.*, c 12, st. 55, Fairfax’s translation.

respects a private end ; that teaches us to destroy one another against law and justice, and that every way always produces very ill effects. It is much more worthy and more becoming to exercise ourselves in things that strengthen than that weaken our government and that tend to the public safety and common glory. The consul, Publius Rutilius,¹ was the first who taught the soldiers to handle their arms with skill, and joined art with valour, not for the use of private quarrel, but for war and the quarrels of the people of Rome ; a popular and civil defence. And besides the example of Cæsar,² who commanded his men to shoot chiefly at the face of Pompey's soldiers in the battle of Pharsalia, a thousand other commanders have also bethought them to invent new forms of weapons and new ways of striking and defending, according as occasion should require.

But as Philopoemen³ condemned wrestling, wherein he excelled, because the preparatives that were therein employed were differing from those that appertain to military discipline, to which alone he conceived men of honour ought wholly to apply themselves ; so it seems to me that this address to which we form our limbs, those writhings and motions young men are taught in this new school, are not only of no use, but rather contrary and hurtful to the practice of fight in battle ; and also our people commonly make use of particular weapons, and peculiarly designed for duel ; and I have seen, when it has been disapproved, that a gentleman challenged to fight with rapier and poignard appeared in the array of a man-at-arms, and that another offered to take his cloak instead

¹ Valerius Maximus, ii. 3, 2.

² Idem, in *Vita*, c. 12.

³ Plutarch, in *Vita*, c. 12.

of his poignard. It is worthy of consideration that Laches in Plato,¹ speaking of learning to fence after our manner, says that he never knew any great soldier come out of that school, especially the masters of it: and, indeed, as to them, our experience tells as much. As to the rest, we may at least conclude that they are qualities of no relation or correspondence; and in the education of the children of his government, Plato² interdicts the art of boxing, introduced by Amycus and Epeius, and that of wrestling, by Antæus and Cercyo, because they have another end than to render youth fit for the service of war and contribute nothing to it. But I see that I have somewhat strayed from my theme.

The Emperor Mauricius,³ being advertised by dreams and several prognostics, that one Phocas, an obscure soldier, should kill him, questioned his son-in-law, Philip, who this Phocas was, and what were his nature, qualities, and manners; and so soon as Philip, amongst other things, had told him that he was cowardly and timorous, the emperor immediately concluded then that he was a murderer and cruel. What is it that makes tyrants so sanguinary? 'Tis only the solicitude for their own safety, and that their faint hearts can furnish them with no other means of securing themselves than in exterminating those who may hurt them, even so much as women, for fear of a scratch.—

"*Cuncta fert dum cuncta timet*"⁴

The first cruelties are exercised for themselves: thence springs the fear of a just revenge, which

¹ In the Dialogue entitled *Laches*

² *Laws*, vii.

³ Flavius Tiberius Mauricius, Emperor of the East, A D 582-620.

⁴ "He strikes all while he fears all"—Claudius, in *Eutrop*, i. 182.

afterwards produces a series of new cruelties, to obliterate one another. Philip, king of Macedon, who had so much to do with the people of Rome, agitated with the horror of so many murders committed by his order, and doubting of being able to keep himself secure from so many families, at divers times mortally injured and offended by him, resolved to seize all the children of those he had caused to be slain, to despatch them daily one after another, and so to establish his own repose.¹

Fine matter is never impertinent, however placed ; and therefore I, who more consider the weight and utility of what I deliver than its order and connection, need not fear in this place to bring in an excellent story, though it be a little by-the-by ; for when they are rich in their own native beauty, and are able to justify themselves, the least end of a hair will serve to draw them into my discourse.

Amongst others condemned by Philip,² had been one Herodicus, prince of Thessaly ; he had, moreover, after him caused his two sons-in-law to be put to death, each leaving a son very young behind him. Theoxena and Archo were their two widows. Theoxena, though highly courted to it, could not be persuaded to marry again : Archo married Poris, the greatest man among the Ænians, and by him had a great many children, whom she, dying, left at a very tender age. Theoxena, moved with a maternal charity towards her nephews, that she might have them under her own eyes and in her own protection, married Poris : when presently comes a proclamation of the king's edict. This brave-spirited mother, suspecting the cruelty of Philip, and afraid of the insolence of the soldiers

¹ Livy, xl. 3

² Livy, xvi. 4.

towards these charming and tender children, was so bold as to declare that she would rather kill them with her own hands than deliver them. Poris, startled at this protestation, promised her to steal them away, and to transport them to Athens, and there commit them to the custody of some faithful friends of his. They took, therefore, the opportunity of an annual feast which was celebrated at *Ænia* in honour of *Æneas*, and thither they went. Having appeared by day at the public ceremonies and banquet, they stole the night following into a vessel laid ready for the purpose, to escape away by sea. The wind proved contrary, and finding themselves in the morning within sight of the land whence they had launched overnight, and being pursued by the guards of the port, Poris perceiving this, laboured all he could to make the mariners do their utmost to escape from the pursuers. But Theoxena, frantic with affection and revenge, in pursuance of her former resolution, prepared both weapons and poison, and exposing them before them ; " Go to, my children," said she, " death is now the only means of your defence and liberty, and shall administer occasion to the gods to exercise their sacred justice: these sharp swords, and these full cups, will open you the way into it ; courage, fear nothing ! And thou, my son, who art the eldest, take this steel into thy hand, that thou mayest the more bravely die." The children having on one side so powerful a counsellor, and the enemy at their throats on the other, run all of them eagerly upon what was next to hand ; and, half dead, were thrown into the sea. Theoxena, proud of having so gloriously provided for the safety of her children, clasping her arms with great affection about her husband's neck. " Let us, my friend," said she,

"follow these boys, and enjoy the same sepulchre they do"; and so, having embraced, they threw themselves headlong into the sea; so that the ship was carried back without the owners into the harbour.

Tyrants, at once both to kill and to make their anger felt, have employed their capacity to invent the most lingering deaths. They will have their enemies despatched, but not so fast that they may not have leisure to taste their vengeance. And therein they are mightily perplexed; for if the torments they inflict are violent, they are short; if long, they are not then so painful as they desire; and thus plague themselves in choice of the greatest cruelty. Of this we have a thousand examples in antiquity, and I know not whether we, unawares, do not retain some traces of this barbarity.

All that exceeds a simple death appears to me absolute cruelty. Our justice cannot expect that he, whom the fear of dying by being beheaded or hanged will not restrain, should be any more awed by the imagination of a languishing fire, pincers, or the wheel. And I know not, in the meantime, whether we do not throw them into despair, for in what condition can be the soul of a man, expecting four-and-twenty hours together to be broken upon a wheel, or after the old way, nailed to a cross? Josephus relates¹ that in the time of the war the Romans made in Judæa, happening to pass by where they had three days before crucified certain Jews, he amongst them knew three of his own friends, and obtained the favour of having them taken down, of whom two, he says, died; the third lived a great while after.

¹ *Hist. of his Life.*

Chalcondylas, a writer of good credit, in the records he has left behind him of things that happened in his time, and near him,¹ tells us, as of the most excessive torment, of that the Emperor Mohammed very often practised, of cutting off men in the middle by the diaphragm with one blow of a scimitar, whence it followed that they died as it were two deaths at once; and both the one part, says he, and the other, were seen to stir and strive a great while after in very great torment. I do not think there was any great suffering in this motion: the torments that are the most dreadful to look on are not always the greatest to endure; and I find those that other historians relate to have been practised by him upon the Epirot lords, are more horrid and cruel, where they were condemned to be flayed alive piecemeal, after so malicious a manner that they continued fifteen days in that misery.

And these other two: Croesus,² having caused a gentleman, the favourite of his brother Pantaleon, to be seized, carried him into a fuller's shop, where he caused him to be scratched and carded with the cards and combs belonging to that trade, till he died. George Sechel, chief commander of the peasants of Poland, who committed so many mischiefs under the title of the Crusade, being defeated in battle and taken by the Waiwode of Transylvania, was three days bound naked upon the rack, exposed to all sorts of torments that any one could contrive against him: during which time many other prisoners were kept fasting; in the end, he living and looking on, they made his beloved brother Lucat, for whom alone he entreated, taking upon himself the blame of all their evil actions,

¹ *Hist. of the Turks*, lib. x.

² Herodotus, i. 92

drink his blood, and caused twenty of his most favoured captains to feed upon him, tearing his flesh in pieces with their teeth, and swallowing the morsels. The remainder of his body and his bowels, so soon as he was dead, were boiled, and others of his followers compelled to eat them.

CHAPTER XXVIII

ALL THINGS HAVE THEIR SEASON

SUCH as compare Cato the Censor with the younger Cato, who killed himself, compare two beautiful natures, much resembling one another. The first acquired his reputation several ways, and excels in military exploits and the utility of his public employments; but the virtue of the younger, besides that it were blasphemy to compare any to it in vigour, was much more pure and unblemished. For who could absolve that of the Censor from envy and ambition, having dared to attack the honour of Scipio, a man in goodness and all other excellent qualities infinitely beyond him or any other of his time?

That which they¹ report of him, amongst other things, that in his extreme old age he put himself upon learning the Greek tongue with so greedy an appetite, as if to quench a long thirst, does not seem to me to make much for his honour; it being properly what we call falling into second childhood. All things have their seasons, even good ones, and I may say my Paternoster out of time; as they

¹ Plutarch, *Life of Cato the Censor*, c 1

accused T. Quintus Flaminius, that being general of an army, he was seen praying apart in the time of a battle that he won¹—

“Imponit finem sapiens et rebus honestis.”²

Eudemondas, seeing Xenocrates when very old, still very intent upon his school lectures. “When will this man be wise,” said he, “if he is yet learning?” And Philopœmen, to those who extolled King Ptolemy for every day inuring his person to the exercise of arms. “It is not,” said he, “commendable in a king of his age to exercise himself in these things; he ought now really to employ them.” The young are to make their preparations, the old to enjoy them, say the sages³: and the greatest vice they observe in us is that our desires incessantly grow young again, we are always re-beginning to live.

Our studies and desires should sometime be sensible of age, yet we have one foot in the grave and still our appetites and pursuits spring every day anew within us:—

“Tu secanda marmora
Locas sub ipsum funus, et, sepulcri
Immemor, struis domos.”⁴

The longest of my designs is not of above a year's extent; I think of nothing now but ending; rid myself of all new hopes and enterprises; take my last leave of every place I depart from, and every day dispossess myself of what I have.

¹ Plutarch, *Parallel of Cato with Philopœmen*, sec. 2.

² “The wise man limits even honest things”—Juvenal, vi. 444.

³ Seneca, *Ep*, 36

⁴ “You against the time of death have marble cut for use, and, forgetful of the tomb, build houses”—Horace, *Od.*, ii 18, 17.

"Olim jam nec perit quicquam mibi, nec acquiritur . . . plus superest viatici quam vise."¹

"Vixi, et, quem dederat cursum fortuna, peregi"²

'Tis indeed the only comfort I find in my old age, that it mortifies in me several cares and desires wherewith my life has been disturbed; the care how the world goes, the care of riches, of grandeur, of knowledge, of health, of myself. There are men who are learning to speak at a time when they should learn to be silent for ever. A man may always study, but he must not always go to school: what a contemptible thing is an old Abecedarian!³

"Diversos diversa juvant, non omnibus annis
Omnia convenient"⁴

If we must study, let us study what is suitable to our present condition, that we may answer as he did, who being asked to what end he studied in his decrepit age, "that I may go out better," said he, "and at greater ease." Such a study was that of the younger Cato, feeling his end approach, and which he met with in Plato's *Discourse of the Eternity of the Soul*: not, as we are to believe, that he was not long before furnished with all sorts of provision for such a departure; for of assurance, an established will and instruction, he had more than Plato had in all his writings, his knowledge and courage were in this respect above philosophy; he applied himself to this study, not for the service

¹ "Hitherto nothing of me has been lost or gained, more remains to pay the way than there is way"—Seneca, *Ep.* 77. The sense seems to be that so far he had met his expenses, but that for the future he was likely to have more than he required.

² "I have lived and finished the career Fortune placed before me."—*Aeneid*, iv. 653.

³ Seneca, *Ep.* 36.

⁴ "Various things delight various men; all things are not for all ages"—Gall, *Eleg.*, i. 104

of his death ; but, as a man whose sleeps were never disturbed in the importance of such a deliberation, he also, without choice or change, continued his studies with the other accustomary actions of his life. The night that he was denied the prætorship he spent in play ; that wherein he was to die he spent in reading.¹ The loss either of life or of office was all one to him.

CHAPTER XXIX

OF VIRTUE²

I FIND by experience, that there is a good deal to be said betwixt the flights and emotions of the soul or a resolute and constant habit ; and very well perceive that there is nothing we may not do, nay, even to the surpassing the Divinity itself, says a certain person,³ forasmuch as it is more to render a man's self impassible by his own study and industry, than to be so by his natural condition ; and even to be able to conjoin to man's imbecility and frailty a God-like resolution and assurance ; but it is by fits and starts ; and in the lives of those heroes of times past there are sometimes miraculous impulses, and that seem infinitely to exceed our natural force ; but they are indeed only impulses : and 'tis hard to believe, that these so elevated qualities in a man can so thoroughly tinct and imbue the soul that they should become ordinary, and, as it were, natural in him. It accidentally happens even to us,

¹ Seneca, *Ep.*, 71 and 104.

² There is some slight difficulty in rendering into English the French term *virtus*, which really approaches in meaning more closely the Latin *virtus*.

³ Seneca, *Ep.*, 73, *De Providentia*, c 5.

who are but abortive births of men, sometimes to launch our souls, when roused by the discourses or examples of others, much beyond their ordinary stretch; but 'tis a kind of passion which pushes and agitates them, and in some sort ravishes them from themselves: but, this perturbation once overcome, we see that they insensibly flag and slacken of themselves, if not to the lowest degree, at least so as to be no more the same; insomuch as that upon every trivial occasion, the losing of a bird, or the breaking of a glass, we suffer ourselves to be moved little less than one of the common people. I am of opinion, that order, moderation, and constancy excepted, all things are to be done by a man that is very imperfect and defective in general. Therefore it is, say the Sages, that to make a right judgment of a man, you are chiefly to pry into his common actions, and surprise him in his everyday habit.

Pyrrho, he who erected so pleasant a knowledge upon ignorance, endeavoured, as all the rest who were really philosophers did, to make his life correspond with his doctrine. And because he maintained the imbecility of human judgment to be so extreme as to be incapable of any choice or inclination, and would have it perpetually wavering and suspended, considering and receiving all things as indifferent, 'tis said,¹ that he always comforted himself after the same manner and countenance: if he had begun a discourse, he would always end what he had to say, though the person he was speaking to had gone away: if he walked, he never stopped for any impediment that stood in his way, being preserved from precipices, collision with carts, and other like accidents, by the care of his friends: for, to fear or to avoid anything, had

¹ Diogenes Laertius, in *Vita*, ix 63.

been to shock his own propositions, which deprived the senses themselves of all election and certainty. Sometimes he suffered incision and cauteries with so great constancy as never to be seen so much as to wince. 'Tis something to bring the soul to these imaginations ; 'tis more to join the effects, and yet not impossible ; but to conjoin them with such perseverance and constancy as to make them habitual, is certainly, in attempts so remote from the common usage, almost incredible to be done. Therefore it was, that being sometime taken in his house sharply scolding with his sister, and being reproached that he therein transgressed his own rules of indifference : "What !" said he, " must this bit of a woman also serve for a testimony to my rules ?" Another time, being seen to defend himself against a dog : " It is," said he, " very hard totally to put off man ; and we must endeavour and force ourselves to resist and encounter things, first by effects, but at least by reason and argument " ¹

About seven or eight years since, a husbandman yet living, but two leagues from my house, having long been tormented with his wife's jealousy, coming one day home from his work, and she welcoming him with her accustomed railing, entered into so great fury that with a sickle he had yet in his hand, he totally cut off all those parts that she was jealous of and threw them in her face. And, 'tis said that a young gentleman of our nation, brisk and amorous, having by his perseverance at last mollified the heart of a fair mistress, enraged, that upon the point of fruition he found himself unable to perform, and that

"Nec viriliter
Iners senile penis extulit caput" ²

¹ Diogenes Laertius, in *Vita*, 66

² Tibullus, *Priap. Carm.*, 84.

as soon as ever he came home he deprived himself of the rebellious member, and sent it to his mistress, a cruel and bloody victim for the expiation of his offence. If this had been done upon mature consideration, and upon the account of religion, as the priests of Cybele did, what should we say of so high an action ?

A few days since, at Bergerac, five leagues from my house, up the river Dordogne, a woman having overnight been beaten and abused by her husband, a choleric ill-conditioned fellow, resolved to escape from his ill-usage at the price of her life ; and going so soon as she was up the next morning to visit her neighbours, as she was wont to do, and having let some words fall in recommendation of her affairs, she took a sister of hers by the hand, and led her to the bridge ; whither being come, and having taken leave of her, in jest as it were, without any manner of alteration in her countenance, she threw herself headlong from the top into the river, and was there drowned. That which is the most remarkable in this is, that this resolution was a whole night forming in her head.

It is quite another thing with the Indian women : for it being the custom there for the men to have many wives, and the best beloved of them to kill herself at her husband's decease, every one of them makes it the business of her whole life to obtain this privilege and gain this advantage over her companions ; and the good offices they do their husbands aim at no other recompense but to be preferred in accompanying him in death :—

" Namque ubi mortifero jacta est fax ultima lecto,
 Uxorium fusis stat pia turba comis .
 Et certamen habent lethi, quæ viva sequatur
 Conjugium . pudor est non licuisse mori

Ardent victrices, et flammæ pectora præbent,
Imponuntque suis ora perusta viris."¹

A certain author of our times reports that he has seen in those Oriental nations this custom in practice, that not only the wives bury themselves with their husbands, but even the slaves he has enjoyed also ; which is done after this manner : The husband being dead, the widow may if she will (but few will) demand two or three months' respite wherein to order her affairs. The day being come, she mounts on horseback, dressed as fine as at her wedding, and with a cheerful countenance says she is going to sleep with her spouse, holding a looking-glass in her left hand and an arrow in the other. Being thus conducted in pomp, accompanied with her kindred and friends and a great concourse of people in great joy, she is at last brought to the public place appointed for such spectacles : this is a great space, in the midst of which is a pit full of wood, and adjoining to it a mount raised four or five steps, upon which she is brought and served with a magnificent repast ; which being done, she falls to dancing and singing, and gives order, when she thinks fit, to kindle the fire. This being done, she descends, and taking the nearest of her husband's relations by the hand, they walk to the river close by, where she strips herself stark naked, and having distributed her clothes and jewels to her friends, plunges herself into the water, as if there to cleanse herself from her sins ; coming out thence, she wraps herself in a yellow linen of five-and-twenty ells long,

¹ "For when they threw the torch on the funeral bed, the pious wives with hair dishevelled, stand around striving, which, living, shall accompany her spouse, and are ashamed that they may not die, they who are preferred expose their breasts to the flame, and they lay their scorched lips on those of their husbands"—Propertius, III. 13, 17

and again giving her hand to this kinsman of her husband's, they return back to the mount, where she makes a speech to the people, and recommends her children to them, if she have any. Betwixt the pit and the mount there is commonly a curtain drawn to screen the burning furnace from their sight, which some of them, to manifest the greater courage, forbid. Having ended what she has to say, a woman presents her with a vessel of oil, wherewith to anoint her head and her whole body, which when done with she throws into the fire, and in an instant precipitates herself after. Immediately, the people throw a good many billets and logs upon her that she may not be long in dying, and convert all their joy into sorrow and mourning. If they are persons of meaner condition, the body of the defunct is carried to the place of sepulture, and there placed sitting, the widow kneeling before him, embracing the dead body; and they continue in this posture whilst the people build a wall about them, which so soon as it is raised to the height of the woman's shoulders, one of her relations comes behind her, and taking hold of her head, twists her neck; so soon as she is dead, the wall is presently raised up, and closed, and there they remain entombed.

There was, in this same country, something like this in their gymnosophists, for not by constraint of others nor by the impetuosity of a sudden humour, but by the express profession of their order, their custom was, as soon as they arrived at a certain age, or that they saw themselves threatened by any disease, to cause a funeral pile to be erected for them, and on the top a stately bed, where, after having joyfully feasted their friends and acquaintance, they laid them down with so great resolution,

that fire being applied to it, they were never seen to stir either hand or foot¹; and after this manner, one of them, Calanus by name, expired in the presence of the whole army of Alexander the Great.² And he was neither reputed holy nor happy amongst them who did not thus destroy himself, dismissing his soul purged and purified by the fire, after having consumed all that was earthly and mortal. This constant premeditation of the whole life is that which makes the wonder.

Amongst our other controversies, that of *Fatum* has also crept in, and to tie things to come, and even our own wills, to a certain and inevitable necessity, we are yet upon this argument of time past: "Since God foresees that all things shall so fall out, as doubtless He does, it must then necessarily follow, that they must so fall out": to which our masters reply: "that the seeing anything come to pass, as we do, and as God Himself also does (for all things being present with him, He rather sees, than foresees), is not to compel an event. that is, we see because things do fall out, but things do not fall out because we see: events cause knowledge, but knowledge does not cause events. That which we see happen, does happen; but it might have happened otherwise: and God, in the catalogue of the causes of events which He has in His prescience, has also those which we call accidental and voluntary, depending upon the liberty. He has given our free will, and knows that we do amiss because we would do so."

I have seen a great many commanders encourage their soldiers with this fatal necessity; for if our time be limited to a certain hour, neither the enemies' shot nor our own boldness, nor our flight

¹ Quintus Curtius, viii. 9

² Plutarch, *Life of Alexander*, c 21.

and cowardice, can either shorten or prolong our lives. This is easily said, but see who will be so easily persuaded ; and if it be so that a strong and lively faith draws along with it actions of the same kind, certainly this faith we so much brag of, is very light in this age of ours, unless the contempt it has of works makes it disdain their company. So it is, that to this very purpose the Sire de Joinville, as credible a witness as any other whatever, tells us of the Bedouins, a nation amongst the Saracens, with whom the king St. Louis had to do in the Holy Land, that they, in their religion, so firmly believed the number of every man's days to be from all eternity prefixed and set down by an inevitable decree, that they went naked to the wars, excepting a Turkish sword, and their bodies only covered with a white linen cloth : and for the greatest curse they could invent when they were angry, this was always in their mouths : "Accursed be thou, as he that arms himself for fear of death." This is a testimony of faith very much beyond ours. And of this sort is that also that two friars of Florence gave in our fathers' days.¹ Being engaged in some controversy of learning, they agreed to go both of them into the fire in the sight of all the people, each for the verification of his argument, and all things were already prepared, and the thing just upon the point of execution, when it was interrupted by an unexpected accident.

A young Turkish lord, having performed a notable exploit in his own person in the sight of both armies, that of Amurath and that of Huniades, ready to join battle, being asked by Amurath, what in such tender and inexperienced years (for it was his first sally into arms) had inspired him with so

¹ 7th April 1498. One of them was Savonarola.

brave a courage, replied, that his chief tutor for valour was a hare. "For being," said he, "one day a hunting, I found a hare sitting, and though I had a brace of excellent greyhounds with me, yet methought it would be best for sureness to make use of my bow, for she sat very fair. I then fell to letting fly my arrows, and shot forty that I had in my quiver, not only without hurting, but without starting her from her form. At last I slipped my dogs after her, but to no more purpose than I had shot: by which I understood that she had been secured by her destiny; and that neither darts nor swords can wound without the permission of fate, which we can neither hasten nor defer." This story may serve, by the way, to let us see how flexible our reason is to all sorts of images.

A person of great years, name, dignity, and learning boasted to me that he had been induced to a certain very important change in his faith by a strange and whimsical incitation, and one otherwise so inadequate, that I thought it much stronger, taken the contrary way: he called it a miracle, and so I look upon it, but in a different sense. The Turkish historians say, that the persuasion those of their nation have imprinted in them of the fatal and unalterable prescription of their days, manifestly conduces to the giving them great assurance in dangers. And I know a great prince who makes very fortunate use of it, whether it be that he really believes it, or that he makes it his excuse for so wonderfully hazarding himself: let us hope Fortune may not be too soon weary of her favour to him.

There has not happened in our memory a more admirable effect of resolution than in those two

who conspired the death of the Prince of Orange.¹ 'Tis marvellous how the second who executed it, could ever be persuaded into an attempt, wherein his companion, who had done his utmost, had had so ill success ; and after the same method, and with the same arms, to go attack a lord, armed with so recent a late lesson of distrust, powerful in followers and bodily strength, in his own hall, amidst his guards, and in a city wholly at his devotion. Assuredly, he employed a very resolute arm and a courage enflamed with furious passion. A poignard is surer for striking home ; but by reason that more motion and force of hand is required than with a pistol, the blow is more subject to be put by or hindered. That this man did not run to a certain death, I make no great doubt, for the hopes any one could flatter him withal, could not find place in any sober understanding, and the conduct of his exploit sufficiently manifests that he had no want of that, no more than of courage. The motives of so powerful a persuasion may be diverse, for our fancy does what it will, both with itself and us. The execution that was done near Orleans² was nothing like this ; there was in this more of chance than vigour, the wound was not mortal, if fortune had not made it so, and to attempt to shoot on horse-back, and at a great distance, by one whose body was in motion from the motion of his horse, was the attempt of a man who had rather miss his blow than fail of saving himself. This was apparent from what followed ; for he was so astonished and stupefied with the thought of so high an execution,

¹ The first of these was Jehan de Jaureguy, who wounded the Prince 18th March 1582, the second, by whom the Prince was killed 10th July 1584, was Balthazar Gerard

² The murder of the Duke of Guise by Poltrot

that he totally lost his judgment both to find his way to flight and to govern his tongue. What needed he to have done more than to fly back to his friends across the river? 'Tis what I have done in less dangers, and that I think of very little hazard, how broad soever the river may be, provided your horse have easy going in, and that you see on the other side easy landing according to the stream. The other,¹ when they pronounced his dreadful sentence, "I was prepared for this," said he, "beforehand, and I will make you wonder at my patience."

The Assassins, a nation bordering upon Phœnicia,² are reputed amongst the Mohammedans a people of very great devotion and purity of manners. They hold that the nearest way to gain Paradise is to kill some one of a contrary religion; which is the reason they have often been seen, being but one or two, and without armour, to attempt against powerful enemies, at the price of a certain death and without any consideration of their own danger. So was our Raymond, Count of Tripoli, assassinated (which word is derived from their name) in the heart of his city,³ during our enterprises of the Holy War; and likewise Conrad, Marquis of Monteferrato,⁴ the murderers at their execution bearing themselves with great pride and glory that they had performed so brave an exploit.

¹ Balthazar Gerard

² Or rather in Egypt, Syria, and Persia. They seem to have borrowed their name from Hassan-ben-Saba, one of their early leaders, and they had altogether an existence of some centuries. They may be classed among the secret societies of the Middle Ages.

³ In 1151.

⁴ At Tyre, 24th April 1192

CHAPTER XXX

OF A MONSTROUS CHILD

THIS story shall go by itself; for I will leave it to physicians to discourse of. Two days ago I saw a child that two men and a nurse, who said they were the father, the uncle, and the aunt of it, carried about to get money by showing it, by reason it was so strange a creature. It was, as to all the rest, of a common form, and could stand upon its feet; could go and gabble much like other children of the same age; it had never as yet taken any other nourishment but from the nurse's breasts, and what, in my presence, they tried to put into the mouth of it it only chewed a little and spat it out again without swallowing; the cry of it seemed indeed a little odd and particular, and it was just fourteen months old. Under the breast it was joined to another child, but without a head, and which had the spine of the back without motion, the rest entire; for though it had one arm shorter than the other, it had been broken by accident at their birth; they were joined breast to breast, and as if a lesser child sought to throw its arms about the neck of one something bigger. The juncture and thickness of the place where they were conjoined was not above four fingers, or thereabouts, so that if you thrust up the imperfect child you might see the navel of the other below it, and the joining was betwixt the paps and the navel. The navel of the imperfect child could not be seen, but all the rest of the belly, so that all that was not joined of the imperfect one, as arms, buttocks, thighs, and legs, hung dangling upon the other, and might reach to the mid-leg. The nurse, moreover, told us that it

urined at both bodies, and that the members of the other were nourished, sensible, and in the same plight with that she gave suck to, excepting that they were shorter and less. This double body and several limbs relating to one head might be interpreted a favourable prognostic to the king,¹ of maintaining these various parts of our state under the union of his laws; but lest the event should prove otherwise, 'tis better to let it alone, for in things already past there needs no divination:—

"Ut quum facta sunt, tum ad conjecturam aliquā interpretatione revocentur"²;

as 'tis said of Epimenides, that he always prophesied backward.

I have just seen a herdsman in Medoc, of about thirty years of age, who has no sign of any genital parts; he has three holes by which he incessantly voids his water; he is bearded, has desire, and seeks contact with women.

Those that we call monsters are not so to God, who sees in the immensity of His work the infinite forms that He has comprehended therein, and it is to be believed that this figure which astonishes us has relation to some other figure of the same kind unknown to man. From His all wisdom nothing but good, common, and regular proceeds; but we do not discern the disposition and relation:—

"Quod crebro videt, non miratur, etiamsi, cur fiat, nescit. Quod ante non vidit, id, si evenerit, ostentum esse censem."³

¹ Henry III

² "So as when they are come to pass, they may then by some interpretation be recalled to conjecture"—Cicero, *De Divin.*, II. 31.

³ "What he often sees he does not admire, though he be ignorant how it comes to pass. When a thing happens he never saw before, he thinks that it is a portent."—Cicero, *De Divin.*, II. 22.

Whatever falls out contrary to custom we say is contrary to nature, but nothing, whatever it be, is contrary to her. Let, therefore, this universal and natural reason expel the error and astonishment that novelty brings along with it.

CHAPTER XXXI

OF ANGER

PLUTARCH is admirable throughout, but especially where he judges of human actions. What fine things does he say in the comparison of Lycurgus and Numa upon the subject of our great folly in abandoning children to the care and government of their fathers? The most of our civil governments, as Aristotle says,¹ leave, after the manner of the Cyclopes, to every one the ordering of their wives and children, according to their own foolish and indiscreet fancy; and the Lacedæmonian and Cretan are almost the only governments that have committed the education of children to the laws. Who does not see that in a state all depends upon their nurture and bringing up? and yet they are left to the mercy of parents, let them be as foolish and ill-conditioned as they may, without any manner of discretion.

Amongst other things, how often have I, as I have passed along our streets, had a good mind to get up a farce, to revenge the poor boys whom I have seen hided, knocked down, and miserably beaten by some father or mother, when in their fury and mad with rage? You shall see them

¹ *Nichom. Ethics*, x. 9.

come out with fire and fury sparkling in their eyes:—

“ Rabie jecur incendente, feruntur,
Præcipites; ut saxa jugis abrupta, quibus mons
Subtrahitur, clivoque latus pendente recedit,”¹

(and according to Hippocrates, the most dangerous maladies are they that disfigure the countenance), with a roaring and terrible voice, very often against those that are but newly come from nurse, and there they are lamed and spoiled with blows, whilst our justice takes no cognisance of it, as if these maims and dislocations were not executed upon members of our commonwealth:—

“ Gratum est, quod patriæ civem populoque dedisti,
Si facis, ut patriæ sit idoneus, utilis agris,
Utilis et bellorum et pacis rebus agendis.”²

There is no passion that so much transports men from their right judgment as anger. No one would demur upon punishing a judge with death who should condemn a criminal on the account of his own choler; why, then, should fathers and pedagogues be any more allowed to whip and chastise children in their anger? 'Tis then no longer correction, but revenge. Chastisement is instead of physic to children; and would we endure a physician who should be animated against and enraged at his patient?

We ourselves, to do well, should never lay a hand upon our servants whilst our anger lasts. When the pulse beats, and we feel emotion in

¹ “They are headlong borne with burning fury as great stones torn from the mountains, by which the steep sides are left naked and bare.”—Juvenal, *Sat.*, vi. 647.

² “It is well when to thy country and the people thou hast given a citizen, provided thou make fit for his country's service; useful to till the earth, useful in affairs of war and peace”—Juvenal, *Sat.*, xiv. 70.

ourselves, let us defer the business ; things will indeed appear otherwise to us when we are calm and cool. 'Tis passion that then commands, 'tis passion that speaks, and not we. Faults seen through passion appear much greater to us than they really are, as bodies do when seen through a mist.¹ He who is hungry uses meat ; but he who will make use of chastisement should have neither hunger nor thirst to it. And, moreover, chastisements that are inflicted with weight and discretion are much better received and with greater benefit by him who suffers ; otherwise, he will not think himself justly condemned by a man transported with anger and fury, and will allege his master's excessive passion, his inflamed countenance, his unwonted oaths, his emotion and precipitous rashness, for his own justification :—

“Ora tument irā, nigrescunt sanguine venæ,
Lumina Gorgoneo sævius igne micant”²

Suetonius reports³ that Caius Rabirius having been condemned by Cæsar, the thing that most prevailed upon the people (to whom he had appealed) to determine the cause in his favour, was the animosity and vehemence that Cæsar had manifested in that sentence.

Saying is a different thing from doing ; we are to consider the sermon apart and the preacher apart. These men lent themselves to a pretty business who in our times have attempted to shake the truth of our Church by the vices of her ministers ; she extracts her testimony elsewhere, 'tis a foolish

¹ Plutarch, *That we should restrain Anger*, c. 11

² “Their faces swell, their veins grow black with rage, and their eyes flash with more than Gorgonian fire”—Ovid, *De Art. Amanti*, III. 503

³ *Life of Cæsar*, c. 12

way of arguing and that would throw all things into confusion. A man whose morals are good may have false opinions, and a wicked man may preach truth, even though he believe it not himself.

'Tis doubtless a fine harmony when doing and saying go together; and I will not deny but that saying, when the actions follow, is not of greater authority and efficacy, as Eudamidas said,¹ hearing a philosopher talk of military affairs. "These things are finely said, but he who speaks them is not to be believed, for his ears have never been used to the sound of the trumpet." And Cleomenes,² hearing an orator declaiming upon valour, burst out into laughter, at which the other being angry; "I should," said he to him, "do the same if it were a swallow that spoke of this subject; but if it were an eagle I should willingly hear him." I perceive, methinks, in the writings of the ancients, that he who speaks what he thinks, strikes much more home than he who only feigns. Hear Cicero speak of the love of liberty: hear Brutus speak of it, the mere written words of this man sound as if he would purchase it at the price of his life. Let Cicero, the father of eloquence, treat of the contempt of death; let Seneca do the same: the first languishingly drawls it out, so that you perceive he would make you resolve upon a thing on which he is not resolved himself; he inspires you not with courage, for he himself has none; the other animates and inflames you. I never read an author, even of those who treat of virtue and of actions, that I do not curiously inquire what kind of a man he was himself; for the Ephori at Sparta, seeing a dissolute fellow propose a wholesome advice to the people, commanded him to

¹ Plutarch, *Apophegms of the Lacedaemonians.*

² Idem, *ibid.*

hold his peace, and entreated a virtuous man to attribute to himself the invention, and to propose it.¹ Plutarch's writings, if well understood, sufficiently bespeak their author, and so that I think I know him even into his soul; and yet I could wish that we had some fuller account of his life. And I am thus far wandered from my subject, upon the account of the obligation I have to Aulus Gellius, for having left us in writing² this story of his manners, that brings me back to my subject of anger. A slave of his, a vicious, ill-conditioned fellow, but who had the precepts of philosophy often ringing in his ears, having for some offence of his been stript by Plutarch's command, whilst he was being whipped, muttered at first, that it was without cause and that he had done nothing to deserve it; but at last falling in good earnest to exclaim against and rail at his master, he reproached him that he was no philosopher, as he had boasted himself to be: that he had often heard him say it was indecent to be angry, nay, had written a book to that purpose; and that the causing him to be so cruelly beaten, in the height of his rage, totally gave the lie to all his writings; to which Plutarch calmly and coldly answered, "How, ruffian," said he, "by what dost thou judge that I am now angry? Does either my face, my colour, or my voice give any manifestation of my being moved? I do not think my eyes look fierce, that my countenance appears troubled, or that my voice is dreadful: am I red, do I foam, does any word escape my lips I ought to repent? Do I start? Do I tremble with fury? For those, I tell thee, are the true signs of anger." And so, turning to the fellow that was whipping him, "Ply

¹ Aulus Gellius, xviii. 3

² Aulus Gellius, i. 26

on thy work," said he, "whilst he and I dispute." This is his story.

Archytas of Tarentum, returning from a war wherein he had been captain-general, found all things in his house in very great disorder, and his lands quite out of tillage, through the ill husbandry of his receiver, and having caused him to be called to him; "Go," said he, "if I were not in anger I would soundly drub your sides."¹ Plato likewise, being highly offended with one of his slaves, gave Speusippus order to chastise him, excusing himself from doing it because he was in anger.² And Carillus, a Lacedæmonian, to a Helot, who carried himself insolently towards him: "By the gods," said he, "if I was not angry, I would immediately cause thee to be put to death."³

'Tis a passion that is pleased with and flatters itself. How often, being moved under a false cause, if the person offending makes a good defence and presents us with a just excuse, are we angry against truth and innocence itself? In proof of which, I remember a marvellous example of antiquity.

Piso, otherwise a man of very eminent virtue,⁴ being moved against a soldier of his, for that returning alone from forage he could give him no account where he had left a companion of his, took it for granted that he had killed him, and presently condemned him to death. He was no sooner mounted upon the gibbet, but, behold, his wandering companion arrives, at which all the

¹ Cicero, *Tusc. Quæs.*, iv. 36

² Seneca, *De Irâ*, iii. 12

³ Plutarch, *Apothegms*

⁴ "Montaigne, for what reason I know not, gives him a better character than Seneca, who, *De Irâ*, lib. 1., cap. 16, says, though he was free from many vices that he was ill-tempered and extremely rigorous"—Coste

army were exceedingly glad, and after many embraces of the two comrades, the hangman carried both the one and the other into Piso's presence, all those present believing it would be a great pleasure even to himself; but it proved quite contrary; for through shame and spite, his fury, which was not yet cool, redoubled; and by a subtlety which his passion suddenly suggested to him, he made three criminal for having found one innocent, and caused them all to be despatched: the first soldier, because sentence had passed upon him; the second, who had lost his way, because he was the cause of his companion's death; and the hangman, for not having obeyed the order which had been given him.

Such as have had to do with testy and obstinate women, may have experimented into what a rage it puts them to oppose silence and coldness to their fury, and that a man disdains to nourish their anger. The orator Celius was wonderfully choleric by nature; and to one who supped in his company, a man of a gentle and sweet conversation, and who, that he might not move him, approved and consented to all he said; he, impatient that his ill-humour should thus spend itself without aliment: "For the love of the gods deny me something," said he, "that we may be two."¹ Women, in like manner, are only angry tha' others may be angry again, in imitation of t'le laws of love. Phocion, to one who interrupted nis speaking by injurious and very opprobrious words, made no other return than silence, and to give him full liberty and leisure to vent his spleen; which he having accordingly done, and the storm blown over, without any mention of

¹ Seneca, *De Ira*, iii. 8.

this disturbance, he proceeded in his discourse where he had left off before.¹ No answer can nettle a man like such a contempt.

Of the most choleric man in France (anger is always an imperfection, but more excusable in a soldier, for in that trade it cannot sometimes be avoided) I often say, that he is the most patient man that I know, and the most discreet in bridling his passions; which rise in him with so great violence and fury:—

“ *Magno veluti cum flamma sonore
Virgea suggeritur costis undantis aheni,
Exsultantque æstu latices, furit intus aquæ vis.
Fumidus atque altè spumis exuberat amnis,
Nec jam se capit unda, volat vapor ater ad auras* ”²,

that he must of necessity cruelly constrain himself to moderate it. And for my part, I know no passion which I could with so much violence to myself attempt to cover and conceal, I would not set wisdom at so high a price, and do not so much consider what a man does, as how much it costs him to do no worse

Another boasted himself to me of the regularity and gentleness of his manners, which are in truth very singular; to whom I replied, that it was indeed something, especially in persons of so eminent a quality as himself, upon whom every one had their eyes, to present himself always well-tempered to the world; but that the principal thing was to make provision for within and for himself; and that it was not in my opinion very

¹ Plutarch, *Instructions for those who manage State Affairs*, c. 10

² “ When with loud crackling noise, a fire of sticks is applied to the boiling caldron's side, by the heat in frisky bells the liquor dances, within the water rages, and high the smoky fluid in foam overflows. Nor can the wave now contain itself; the black steam flies all abroad ”—Ænoid, vii. 462.

well to order his business outwardly well, and to grate himself within, which I was afraid he did, in putting on and maintaining this mask and external appearance.

A man harbours anger by concealing it, as Diogenes told Demosthenes, who, for fear of being seen in a tavern, withdrew himself the more retiredly into it : " The more you retire backward, the farther you enter in."¹ I would rather advise that a man should give his servant a box of the ear a little unseasonably, than rack his fancy to present this grave and composed countenance ; and had rather discover my passions than brood over them at my own expense ; they grow less in venting and manifesting themselves ; and 'tis much better their point should wound others without, than be turned towards ourselves within :—

" *Omnia vitia in aperto leviora sunt. et tunc perniciosissima, quum simulata sanitatem subsident.*"²

I admonish all those who have authority to be angry in my family, in the first place to manage their anger and not to lavish it upon every occasion, for that both lessens the value and hinders the effect : rash and incessant scolding runs into custom, and renders itself despised ; and what you lay out upon a servant for a theft is not felt, because it is the same he has seen you a hundred times employ against him for having ill washed a glass, or set a stool out of place. Secondly, that they be not angry to no purpose, but make sure that their reprobation reach him with whom they are

¹ Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Diogenes the Cynic*, vi. 34

² " All vices are less dangerous when open to be seen, and then most pernicious when they lurk under a dissembled good nature."—Seneca, *Ep.*, 56

offended ; for, ordinarily, they rail and bawl before he comes into their presence, and continue scolding an age after he is gone :—

“ *Et secum petulans amentia certat* ”¹ :

they attack his shadow, and drive the storm in a place where no one is either chastised or concerned, but in the clamour of their voice. I likewise in quarrels condemn those who huff and vapour without an enemy : those rhodomontades should be reserved to discharge upon the offending party :—

“ *Mugitus veluti cum prima in prælia taurus
Terrificos ciet, atque irasci in cornua tentat,
Arboris obnixus trunco, ventospue lassedit
Ictibus, et sparsâ ad pugnum proludit arenâ.* ”²

When I am angry, my anger is very sharp but withal very short, and as private as I can ; I lose myself indeed in promptness and violence, but not in trouble ; so that I throw out all sorts of injurious words at random, and without choice, and never consider pertinently to dart my language where I think it will deepest wound, for I commonly make use of no other weapon than my tongue. My servants have a better bargain of me in great occasions than in little ; the little ones surprise me ; and the misfortune is, that when you are once upon the precipice, 'tis no matter who gave you the push, you always go to the bottom ; the fall urges, moves, and makes haste of itself. In great occasions this satisfies me, that they are so just every one expects a reasonable indignation, and then

¹ “ And petulant madness contends with itself.”—Claudian in *Eutrop*, i. 237.

² “ As when a bull to usher in the fight, makes dreadful bellowings, and whets his horns against the trunk of a tree ; with blows he beats the air, and rehearses the fight by scattering the sand.”—*Aeneid*, xii. 103.

I glorify myself in deceiving their expectation ; against these, I fortify and prepare myself ; they disturb my head, and threaten to transport me very far, should I follow them. I can easily contain myself from entering into one of these passions, and am strong enough, when I expect them, to repel their violence, be the cause never so great ; but if a passion once prepossess and seize me, it carries me away, be the cause never so small. I bargain thus with those who may contend with me : when you see me moved first, let me alone, right or wrong ; I'll do the same for you. The storm is only begot by a concurrence of angers, which easily spring from one another, and are not born together. Let every one have his own way, and we shall be always at peace. A profitable advice, but hard to execute. Sometimes also it falls out that I put on a seeming anger, for the better governing of my house, without any real emotion. As age renders my humours more sharp, I study to oppose them, and will, if I can, order it so, that for the future I may be so much the less peevish and hard to please, as I have more excuse and inclination to be so, although I have heretofore been reckoned amongst those who have the greatest patience.

A word more to conclude this argument. Aristotle says,¹ that anger sometimes serves for arms to virtue and valour. That is probable ; nevertheless, they who contradict him² pleasantly answer, that 'tis a weapon of novel use, for we move all other arms, this moves us ; our hand guides it not, 'tis it that guides our hand ; it holds us, we hold not it.

¹ *Nichom. Ethics*, iii. 8

² Seneca, *De Ira*, i. 16.

CHAPTER XXXII

DEFENCE OF SENECA AND PLUTARCH

THE familiarity I have with these two authors, and the assistance they have lent to my age and to my book, wholly compiled of what I have borrowed from them, oblige me to stand up for their honour.

As to Seneca, amongst a million of little pamphlets that those of the so-called reformed religion disperse abroad for the defence of their cause (and which sometimes proceed from so good a hand, that 'tis pity his pen is not employed in a better subject), I have formerly seen one, that to make up the parallel he would fain find out betwixt the government of our late poor King Charles IX. and that of Nero, compares the late Cardinal of Lorraine with Seneca; their fortunes, in having both of them been the prime ministers in the government of their princes, and in their manners, conditions, and deportments to have been very near alike. Wherein, in my opinion, he does the said cardinal a very great honour; for though I am one of those who have a very high esteem for his wit, eloquence, and zeal to religion and the service of his king, and his good fortune to have lived in an age wherein it was so novel, so rare, and also so necessary for the public good to have an ecclesiastical person of such high birth and dignity, and so sufficient and capable of his place; yet, to confess the truth, I do not think his capacity by many degrees near to the other, nor his virtue either so clean, entire, or steady as that of Seneca.

Now the book whereof I speak, to bring about its design, gives a very injurious description of Seneca, having borrowed its approaches from Dion

the historian, whose testimony I do not at all believe : for besides that he is inconsistent, that after having called Seneca one while very wise, and again a mortal enemy to Nero's vices, makes him elsewhere avaricious, an usurer, ambitious, effeminate, voluptuous, and a false pretender to philosophy, his virtue appears so vivid and vigorous in his writings, and his vindication is so clear from any of these imputations, as of his riches and extraordinarily expensive way of living, that I cannot believe any testimony to the contrary. And besides, it is much more reasonable to believe the Roman historians in such things than Greeks and foreigners. Now Tacitus¹ and the rest speak very honourably both of his life and death ; and represent him to us a very excellent and virtuous person in all things ; and I will allege no other reproach against Dion's report but this, which I cannot avoid, namely, that he has so weak a judgment in the Roman affairs, that he dares to maintain Julius Cæsar's cause against Pompey, and that of Antony against Cicero.

Let us now come to Plutarch : Jean Bodin is a good author of our times, and a writer of much greater judgment than the rout of scribblers of his age, and who deserves to be read and considered. I find him, though, a little bold in this passage of his Method of history, where he accuses Plutarch not only of ignorance (wherein I would have let him alone : for that is beyond my criticism), but that he "often writes things incredible, and absolutely fabulous" : these are his own words. If he had simply said, that he had delivered things otherwise than they really are, it had been no

¹ Tacitus, *Annal.*, XIII. 11 ; XIV. 53, 4, 5 ; XV. 60, 64. Tacitus, however, relates several instances as to Seneca which are very censurable.

great reproach ; for what we have not seen, we are forced to receive from other hands, and take upon trust, and I see that he purposely sometimes variously relates the same story ; as the judgment of the three best captains that ever were, given by Hannibal ; 'tis one way in the Life of Flaminius, and another in that of Pyrrhus. But to charge him with having taken incredible and impossible things for current pay, is to accuse the most judicious author in the world of want of judgment. And this is his example ; "as," says he, "when he relates that a Lacedæmonian boy suffered his bowels to be torn out by a fox-cub he had stolen, and kept it still concealed under his coat till he fell down dead, rather than he would discover his theft."¹ I find, in the first place, this example ill chosen, forasmuch as it is very hard to limit the power of the faculties of the soul, whereas we have better authority to limit and know the force of the bodily limbs ; and therefore, if I had been he, I should rather have chosen an example of this second sort ; and there are some of these less credible : and amongst others, that which he relates of Pyrrhus, that "all wounded as he was, he struck one of his enemies, who was armed from head to foot, so great a blow with his sword, that he clave him down from his crown to his seat, so that the body was divided into two parts."² In this example I find no great miracle, nor do I admit the excuse with which he defends Plutarch, in having added these words, "as 'tis said," to suspend our belief ; for unless it be in things received by authority, and the reverence to antiquity or religion, he would never have himself admitted, or enjoined us to believe things incredible

¹ *Life of Lycurgus*, c. 14.² *Life of Pyrrhus*, c. 12.

in themselves ; and that these words, “as 'tis said,” are not put in this place to that effect, is easy to be seen, because he elsewhere relates to us, upon this subject, of the patience of the Lacedæmonian children, examples happening in his time, more unlikely to prevail upon our faith ; as what Cicero has also testified¹ before him, as having, as he says, been upon the spot : that even to their times there were children found who, in the trial of patience they were put to before the altar of Diana, suffered themselves to be there whipped till the blood ran down all over their bodies, not only without crying out, but without so much as a groan, and some till they there voluntarily lost their lives : and that which Plutarch also, amongst a hundred other witnesses, relates, that at a sacrifice, a burning coal having fallen into the sleeve of a Lacedæmonian boy, as he was censing, he suffered his whole arm to be burned, till the smell of the broiling flesh was perceived by those present. There was nothing, according to their custom, wherein their reputation was more concerned, nor for which they were to undergo more blame and disgrace, than in being taken in theft. I am so fully satisfied of the greatness of those people, that this story does not only not appear to me, as to Bodin, incredible ; but I do not find it so much as rare and strange. The Spartan history is full of a thousand more cruel and rare examples : and is, indeed, all miracle in this respect.

Marcellinus, concerning theft, reports² that in his time there was no sort of torments which could compel the Egyptians, when taken in this act, though a people very much addicted to it, so much as to tell their name.

¹ *Tusc. Quæs.*, ii. 14, v. 27.

² *Lib. xxii.*, cap. 16.

A Spanish peasant, being put to the rack as to the accomplices of the murder of the Praetor Lucius Piso, cried out in the height of the torment, "that his friends should not leave him, but look on in all assurance, and that no pain had the power to force from him one word of confession," which was all they could get the first day. The next day, as they were leading him a second time to another trial, strongly disengaging himself from the hands of his guards, he furiously ran his head against a wall, and beat out his brains.¹

Epicharis, having tired and glutted the cruelty of Nero's satellites, and undergone their fire, their beating, their racks, a whole day together, without one syllable of confession of her conspiracy ; being the next day brought again to the rack, with her limbs almost torn to pieces, conveyed the lace of her robe with a running noose over one of the arms of her chair, and suddenly slipping her head into it, with the weight of her own body hanged herself.² Having the courage to die in that manner, is it not to be presumed that she purposely lent her life to the trial of her fortitude the day before, to mock the tyrant, and encourage others to the like attempt ?

And whoever will inquire of our troopers the experiences they have had in our civil wars, will find effects of patience and obstinate resolution in this miserable age of ours, and amongst this rabble even more effeminate than the Egyptians, worthy to be compared with those we have just related of the Spartan virtue.

I know there have been simple peasants amongst us who have endured the soles of their feet to be broiled upon a gridiron, their finger-ends to be

¹ Tacitus, *Annal.*, iv. 45

² Idem, *ibid.*, xv. 57.

crushed with the cock of a pistol, and their bloody eyes squeezed out of their heads by force of a cord twisted about their brows, before they would so much as consent to a ransom. I have seen one left stark naked for dead in a ditch, his neck black and swollen, with a halter yet about it with which they had dragged him all night at a horse's tail, his body wounded in a hundred places, with stabs of daggers that had been given him, not to kill him, but to put him to pain and to affright him, who had endured all this, and even to being speechless and insensible, resolved, as he himself told me, rather to die a thousand deaths (as indeed, as to matter of suffering, he had borne one) before he would promise anything ; and yet he was one of the richest husbandmen of all the country. How many have been seen patiently to suffer themselves to be burnt and roasted for opinions taken upon trust from others, and by them not at all understood ? I have known a hundred and a hundred women (for Gascony has a certain prerogative for obstinacy) whom you might sooner have made eat fire than forsake an opinion they had conceived in anger. They are all the more exasperated by blows and constraint. And he that made the story of the woman who, in defiance of all correction, threats, and bastinadoes, ceased not to call her husband lousy knave, and who being plunged over head and ears in water, yet lifted her hands above her head and made a sign of cracking lice, feigned a tale of which, in truth, we every day see a manifest image in the obstinacy of women. And obstinacy is the sister of constancy, at least in vigour and stability.

We are not to judge what is possible and what is not, according to what is credible and incredible

to our apprehension, as I have said elsewhere¹; and it is a great fault, and yet one that most men are guilty of, which, nevertheless, I do not mention with any reflection upon Bodin, to make a difficulty of believing that in another which they could not or would not do themselves. Every one thinks that the sovereign stamp of human nature is imprinted in him, and that from it all others must take their rule; and that all proceedings which are not like his are feigned and false. Is anything of another's actions or faculties proposed to him? the first thing he calls to the consultation of his judgment is his own example; and as matters go with him, so they must of necessity do with all the world besides. O dangerous and intolerable folly! For my part, I consider some men as infinitely beyond me, especially amongst the ancients, and yet, though I clearly discern my inability to come near them by a thousand paces, I do not forbear to keep them in sight, and to judge of what so elevates them, of which I perceive some seeds in myself, as I also do of the extreme meanness of some other minds, which I neither am astonished at nor yet misbelieve. I very well perceive the turns those great souls take to raise themselves to such a pitch, and admire their greatness; and those flights that I think the bravest I embrace; where, though I want wing, yet my judgment readily goes along with them.

The other example he introduces of "things incredible and wholly fabulous," delivered by Plutarch,² is, that "Agesilaus was fined by the Ephori for having wholly engrossed the hearts and affections of his citizens to himself alone." And herein I do not see what sign of falsity is to be found: clearly Plutarch speaks of things that must

¹ Book 1., chap 26.

² *Life of Agesilaus*, c. 1.

needs be better known to him than to us ; and it was no new thing in Greece to see men punished and exiled for this very thing, for being too acceptable to the people ; witness the Ostracism and Petalism.¹

There is yet in this place another accusation laid against Plutarch which I cannot well digest, where Bodin says that he has sincerely paralleled Romans with Romans, and Greeks amongst themselves, but not Romans with Greeks ; witness, says he, Demosthenes and Cicero, Cato and Aristides, Sylla and Lysander, Marcellus and Pelopidas, Pompey and Agesilaus, holding that he has favoured the Greeks in giving them so unequal companions. This is really to attack what in Plutarch is most excellent and most to be commended ; for in his parallels (which is the most admirable part of all his works, and with which, in my opinion, he is himself the most pleased) the fidelity and sincerity of his judgments equal their depth and weight ; he is a philosopher who teaches us virtue. Let us see whether we cannot defend him from this reproach of falsity and prevarication. All that I can imagine could give occasion to this censure is the great and shining lustre of the Roman names which we have in our minds , it does not seem likely to us that Demosthenes could rival the glory of a consul, proconsul, and praetor of that great Republic ; but if a man consider the truth of the thing, and the men in themselves, which is Plutarch's chiefest aim, and will rather balance their manners, their natures, and parts, than their fortunes, I think, contrary to Bodin, that Cicero and the elder Cato come far short of the men with whom they are compared. I should sooner, for his purpose, have chosen the

¹ Ostracism at Athens was banishment for ten years ; petalism at Syracuse was banishment for five years.

example of the younger Cato compared with Phocion, for in this couple there would have been a more likely disparity, to the Roman's advantage. As to Marcellus, Sylla, and Pompey, I very well discern that their exploits of war are greater and more full of pomp and glory than those of the Greeks, whom Plutarch compares with them; but the bravest and most virtuous actions, any more in war than elsewhere, are not always the most renowned. I often see the names of captains obscured by the splendour of other names of less desert; witness Labienus, Ventidius, Telesinus, and several others. And to take it by that, were I to complain on the behalf of the Greeks, could I not say, that Camillus was much less comparable to Themistocles, the Gracchi to Agis and Cleomenes, and Numa to Lycurgus? But 'tis folly to judge, at one view, of things that have so many aspects. When Plutarch compares them, he does not, for all that, make them equal; who could more learnedly and sincerely have marked their distinctions? Does he parallel the victories, feats of arms, the force of the armies conducted by Pompey, and his triumphs, with those of Agesilaus? "I do not believe," says he,¹ "that Xenophon himself, if he were now living, though he were allowed to write whatever pleased him to the advantage of Agesilaus, would dare to bring them into comparison." Does he speak of paralleling Lysander to Sylla. "There is," says he, "no comparison, either in the number of victories or in the hazard of battles, for Lysander only gained two naval battles," &c.² This is not to derogate from the Romans; for having only simply named them with the Greeks, he can have done them no injury,

¹ *Parallel of Pompey and Agesilaus.*² *Parallel of Sylla and Lysander*

what disparity soever there may be betwixt them : and Plutarch does not entirely oppose them to one another ; there is no preference in general ; he only compares the pieces and circumstances one after another, and gives of every one a particular and separate judgment. Wherefore, if any one could convict him of partiality, he ought to pick out some one of those particular judgments, or say, in general, that he was mistaken in comparing such a Greek to such a Roman, when there were others more fit and better resembling to parallel him to.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE STORY OF SPURINA

PHILOSOPHY thinks she has not ill employed her talent when she has given the sovereignty of the soul and the authority of restraining our appetites to reason. Amongst which, they who judge that there is none more violent than those which spring from love, have this opinion also, that they seize both body and soul, and possess the whole man, so that even health itself depends upon them, and medicine is sometimes constrained to pimp for them ; but one might, on the contrary, also say, that the mixture of the body brings an abatement and weakening ; for such desires are subject to satiety, and capable of material remedies.

Many, being determined to rid their soul from the continual alarms of this appetite, have made use of incision and amputation of the rebelling members ; others have subdued their force and ardour by the frequent application of cold things, as snow and vinegar. The sackcloths of our ancestors were for

this purpose, which is cloth woven of horse hair, of which some of them made shirts, and others girdles, to torture and correct their reins. A prince, not long ago, told me that in his youth, upon a solemn festival in the court of King Francis I., where everybody was finely dressed, he would needs put on his father's hair shirt, which was still kept in the house ; but how great soever his devotion was, he had not patience to wear it till night, and was sick a long time after ; adding withal, that he did not think there could be any youthful heat so fierce that the use of this recipe would not mortify, and yet perhaps he never essayed the most violent ; for experience shows us, that such emotions are often seen under rude and slovenly clothes, and that a hair shirt does not always render those chaste who wear it.¹

Xenocrates proceeded with greater rigour in this affair ; for his disciples, to make trial of his consistency, having slipt Lais, that beautiful and famous courtesan, into his bed, quite naked, excepting the arms of her beauty and her wanton allurements, her philters, finding that, in despite of his reason and philosophical rules, his unruly flesh began to mutiny, he caused those members of his to be burned that he found consenting to this rebellion.* Whereas the passions which wholly reside in the soul, as ambition, avarice, and the rest, find the reason much more to do, because it cannot there be helped but by its own means ; neither are those appetites capable of satiety, but grow sharper and increase by fruition.

¹ In the original there is a play on the words *haire* and *hōrē*, the former meaning a cilice or hair shirt, derived from a coarse habit worn by the people of Cilicia, and the latter a poor, feeble creature, *un pauprē hōrē*.

* Diogenes Laertius, in *Vita*, iv. 7.

The sole example of Julius Cæsar may suffice to demonstrate to us the disparity of these appetites ; for never was man more addicted to amorous delights than he : of which one testimony is the peculiar care he had of his person, to such a degree, as to make use of the most lascivious means to that end then in use, as to have all the hairs of his body twitched off, and to wipe all over with perfumes with the extremest nicety.¹ And he was a beautiful person in himself, of a fair complexion, tall, and sprightly, full faced, with quick hazel eyes, if we may believe Suetonius ; for the statues of him that we see at Rome do not in all points answer this description. Besides his wives, whom he four times changed, without reckoning the amours of his boyhood with Nicomedes, king of Bithynia, he had the maidenhead of the renowned Cleopatra, queen of Egypt ; witness the little Cæsario whom he had by her.² He also made love to Eunoé,³ queen of Mauritania, and at Rome, to Posthumia, the wife of Servius Sulpitius : to Lollia, the wife of Gabinius : to Tertulla, the wife of Crassus, and even to Mutia, wife to the great Pompey : which was the reason, the Roman historians say, that she was repudiated by her husband, which Plutarch confesses to be more than he knew ; and the Curios, both father and son, afterwards reproached Pompey, when he married Cæsar's daughter, that he had made himself son-in-law to a man who had made him cuckold, and one whom he himself was wont to call Ægisthus. Besides all these, he entertained Servilia, Cato's sister and mother to Marcus Brutus, whence, every one believes, proceeded the great affection he had to Brutus, by reason that he was

¹ Suetonius, in *Vita*, c. 45

² Plutarch, *Life of Cæsar*, c. 13.
³ Suetonius, *ab id suprad*, c. 50, &c.

born at a time when it was likely he might be his son. So that I have reason, methinks, to take him for a man extremely given to this debauch, and of a very amorous constitution. But the other passion of ambition, with which he was infinitely smitten, arising in him to contend with the former, it was soon compelled to give way.

And here calling to mind Mohammed, who won Constantinople, and finally exterminated the Grecian name, I do not know where these two passions were so evenly balanced; equally an indefatigable lecher and soldier: but where they both meet in his life and jostle one another, the quarrelling passion always gets the better of the amorous one; and this, though it was out of its natural season, never regained an absolute sovereignty over the other till he had arrived at an extreme old age, and unable to undergo the fatigues of war.

What is related for a contrary example, of Ladislaus, king of Naples, is very remarkable; that being a great captain, valiant and ambitious, he proposed to himself for the principal end of his ambition, the execution of his pleasure and the enjoyment of some rare and excellent beauty. His death sealed up all the rest: for having by a close and tedious siege reduced the city of Florence to so great distress that the inhabitants were compelled to capitulate about surrender, he was content to let them alone, provided they would deliver up to him a beautiful maid he had heard of in their city; they were forced to yield to it, and by a private injury to avert the public ruin. She was the daughter of a famous physician of his time, who, finding himself involved in so foul a necessity, resolved upon a high attempt. As every one was

lending a hand to trick up his daughter and to adorn her with ornaments and jewels to render her more agreeable to this new lover, he also gave her a handkerchief most richly wrought, and of an exquisite perfume, an implement they never go without in those parts, which she was to make use of at their first approaches. This handkerchief, poisoned with his greatest art, coming to be rubbed between the chased flesh and open pores, both of the one and the other, so suddenly infused the poison, that immediately converting their warm into a cold sweat they presently died in one another's arms.¹

But I return to Cæsar. His pleasures never made him steal one minute of an hour, nor go one step aside from occasions that might any way conduce to his advancement. This passion was so sovereign in him over all the rest, and with so absolute authority possessed his soul, that it guided him at pleasure. In truth, this troubles me, when, as to everything else, I consider the greatness of this man, and the wonderful parts wherewith he was endued; learned to that degree in all sorts of knowledge that there is hardly any one science of which he has not written²; so great an orator that many have preferred his eloquence to that of Cicero, and he, I conceive, did not think himself inferior to him in that particular, for his two anti-Catos were written to counterbalance the elocution that Cicero had expended in his Cato. As to the rest, was ever soul so vigilant, so active, and so patient of labour as his? and, doubtless, it was embellished with many rare seeds of virtue, lively, natural, and

¹ See as to this adventure, which is highly problematical, Sismondi's *Hist. des Républiques Italiennes*, viii 210.

² Suetonius, in *Vita*, c. 55, 56

not put on ; he was singularly sober ; so far from being delicate in his diet, that Oppius relates,¹ how that having one day at table set before him medicated instead of common oil in some sauce, he ate heartily of it, that he might not put his entertainer out of countenance. Another time he caused his baker to be whipped for serving him with a finer than ordinary sort of bread.² Cato himself was wont to say of him, that he was the first sober man who ever made it his business to ruin his country.³ And as to the same Cato's calling him one day drunkard, it fell out thus : being both of them in the Senate, at a time when Catiline's conspiracy was in question, of which Cæsar was suspected, one came and brought him a letter sealed up. Cato believing that it was something the conspirators gave him notice of, required him to deliver it into his hand, which Cæsar was constrained to do to avoid further suspicion. It was by chance a love-letter that Servilia, Cato's sister, had written to him, which Cato having read, he threw it back to him saying, "There, drunkard."⁴ This, I say, was rather a word of disdain and anger than an express reproach of this vice, as we often rate those who anger us with the first injurious words that come into our mouths, though nothing due to those we are offended at ; to which may be added that the vice with which Cato upbraided him is wonderfully near akin to that wherein he had surprised Cæsar ; for Bacchus and Venus, according to the proverb, very willingly agree ; but to me Venus is much more sprightly accompanied by sobriety.

The examples of his sweetness and clemency to

¹ Suetonius, *in Vstd*, c. 53

² Idem, *sbd*, c. 48.

³ Idem, *sbd*, c. 53.

⁴ Plutarch, *Life of Cato*, c. 7.

those by whom he had been offended are infinite ; I mean, besides those he gave during the time of the civil wars, which, as plainly enough appears by his writings, he practised to cajole his enemies, and to make them less afraid of his future dominion and victory. But I must also say, that if these examples are not sufficient proofs of his natural sweetness,¹ they, at least, manifest a marvellous confidence and grandeur of courage in this person. He has often been known to dismiss whole armies, after having overcome them, to his enemies, without ransom, or deigning so much as to bind them by oath, if not to favour him, at least no more to bear arms against him, he has three or four times taken some of Pompey's captains prisoners, and as often set them at liberty. Pompey declared all those to be enemies who did not follow him to the war ; he proclaimed all those to be his friends who sat still and did not actually take arms against him.² To such captains of his as ran away from him to go over to the other side, he sent, moreover, their arms, horses, and equipage : the cities he had taken by force he left at full liberty to follow which side they pleased, imposing no other garrison upon them but the memory of his gentleness and clemency. He gave strict and express charge, the day of his great battle of Pharsalia, that, without the utmost necessity, no one should lay a hand upon the citizens of Rome.³ These, in my opinion, were very hazardous proceedings, and 'tis no wonder if those in our civil war, who, like him, fight against the ancient estate of their country, do not follow his example ; they are extraordinary

¹ "Montaigne, in Book II, c. 11, writes with greater justice of this affected clemency of Cæsar."—*Le Clerc*

² Suetonius, in *Vita*, c. 75.

³ *Idem, ibid*

means, and that only appertain to Cæsar's fortune, and to his admirable foresight in the conduct of affairs. When I consider the incomparable grandeur of his soul, I excuse victory that it could not disengage itself from him, even in so unjust and so wicked a cause.

To return to his clemency. we have many striking examples in the time of his government, when, all things being reduced to his power, he had no more need to dissemble. Caius Memmius had written very severe orations against him which he had as sharply answered: yet he did not soon after forbear to use his interest to make him consul.¹ Caius Calvus, who had composed several injurious epigrams against him, having employed many of his friends to mediate a reconciliation with him, Cæsar voluntarily persuaded himself to write first to him. And our good Catullus, who had so rudely ruffled him under the name of Mamurra,² coming to offer his excuses to him, he made the same day sit at his table.³ Having intelligence of some who spoke ill of him, he did no more, but only by a public oration declare that he had notice of it. He still less feared his enemies than he hated them, some conspiracies and cabals that were made against his life being discovered to him, he satisfied himself in publishing by proclamation that they were known to him, without further prosecuting the conspirators.⁴

As to the respect he had for his friends: Caius Oppius, being with him upon a journey, and finding himself ill, he left him the only lodging he had for himself, and lay all night upon a hard ground in the open air.⁵ As to what concerns his justice,

¹ Suetonius, *in Vida*, c. 73
² Suetonius, *in Vida*, c. 73

³ Catullus, *Carm*, 29.
⁴ Idem, *ibid*
⁵ Idem, *ibid*, c. 72.

honour such actions : such excesses are enemies to my rules. The design was conscientious and good, but certainly a little defective in prudence. What ! if his deformity served afterwards to make others guilty of the sin of hatred or contempt ; or of envy at the glory of so rare a recommendation ; or of calumny, interpreting this humour a mad ambition ! Is there any form from which vice cannot, if it will, extract occasion to exercise itself, one way or another ? It had been more just, and also more noble, to have made of these gifts of God a subject of exemplary regularity and virtue.

They who retire themselves from the common offices, from that infinite number of troublesome rules that fetter a man of exact honesty in civil life, are in my opinion very discreet, what peculiar sharpness of constraint soever they impose upon themselves in so doing. 'Tis in some sort a kind of dying to avoid the pain of living well. They may have another reward ; but the reward of difficulty I fancy they can never have ; nor, in uneasiness, that there can be anything more or better done than the keeping oneself upright amid the waves of the world, truly and exactly performing all parts of our duty. 'Tis, peradventure, more easy to keep clear of the sex than to maintain one's self aright in all points in the society of a wife ; and a man may with less trouble adapt himself to entire abstinence than to the due dispensation of abundance. Use, carried on according to reason, has in it more of difficulty than abstinence ; moderation is a virtue that gives more work than suffering ; the well living of Scipio has a thousand fashions, that of Diogenes but one ; this as much excels the ordinary lives in innocence as the most accomplished excel them in utility and force.

CHAPTER XXXIV

OBSERVATION ON THE METHOD OF JULIUS
CÆSAR IN MAKING WAR

'Tis related of many great leaders that they have had certain books in particular esteem, as Alexander the Great, Homer; Scipio Africanus, Xenophon; Marcus Brutus, Polybius; Charles V., Philip de Comines; and 'tis said that, in our times, Machiavelli is elsewhere still in repute; but the late Marshal Strozzi, who had taken *Cæsar* for his part, doubtless made the best choice, seeing that it indeed ought to be the breviary of every soldier, as being the true and sovereign pattern of the military art. And, moreover, God knows with what grace and beauty he has embellished that rich matter, with so pure, delicate, and perfect expression, that, in my opinion, there are no writings in the world comparable to his, as to that business.

I will set down some rare and particular passages of his wars that remain in my memory.

His army, being in some consternation upon the rumour that was spread of the great forces that King Juba was leading against him, instead of abating the apprehension which his soldiers had conceived at the news and of lessening to them the forces of the enemy, having called them all together to encourage and reassure them, he took a quite contrary way to what we are used to do, for he told them that they need no more trouble themselves with inquiring after the enemy's forces, for that he was certainly informed thereof, and then told them of a number much surpassing both the truth and the report that was current in his army¹; following

¹ Suetonius, in *Vita*, 66

the advice of Cyrus in Xenophon, forasmuch as the deception is not of so great importance to find an enemy weaker than we expected, than to find him really very strong, after having been made to believe that he was weak.

It was always his use to accustom his soldiers simply to obey, without taking upon them to control, or so much as to speak of their captain's designs, which he never communicated to them but upon the point of execution; and he took a delight, if they discovered anything of what he intended, immediately to change his orders to deceive them, and to that purpose, would often, when he had assigned his quarters in a place, pass forward and lengthen his day's march, especially if it was foul and rainy weather.¹

The Swiss, in the beginning of his wars in Gaul, having sent to him to demand a free passage over the Roman territories, though resolved to hinder them by force, he nevertheless spoke kindly to the messengers, and took some respite to return an answer, to make use of that time for the calling his army together.² These silly people did not know how good a husband he was of his time: for he often repeats that it is the best part of a captain to know how to make use of occasions, and his diligence in his exploits is, in truth, unheard of and incredible.

If he was not very conscientious in taking advantage of an enemy under colour of a treaty of agreement, he was as little so in this, that he required no other virtue in a soldier but valour only, and seldom punished any other faults but mutiny and disobedience. He would often after his victories turn them loose to all sorts of licence,

¹ Suetonius, in *Vita*, 65

² Cesar, *De Bell. Gall.*, 1. 7.

dispensing them for some time from the rules of military discipline, saying withal that he had soldiers so well trained up that, powdered and perfumed, they would run furiously to the fight.¹ In truth, he loved to have them richly armed, and made them wear engraved, gilded, and damasked armour, to the end that the care of saving it might engage them to a more obstinate defence.² Speaking to them, he called them by the name of fellow-soldiers,³ which we yet use; which his successor, Augustus, reformed, supposing he had only done it upon necessity, and to cajole those who merely followed him as volunteers:—

“Rheni mihi Cæsar in undis
Dux erat, hic socius, facinus quos inquinat, aequat”⁴.

but that this carriage was too mean and low for the dignity of an emperor and general of an army, and therefore brought up the custom of calling them soldiers only.⁵

With this courtesy Cæsar mixed great severity to keep them in awe, the ninth legion having mutinied near Placentia, he ignominiously cashiered them, though Pompey was then yet on foot, and received them not again to grace till after many supplications; he quieted them more by authority and boldness than by gentle ways.⁶

In that place where he speaks of his passage over the Rhine to Germany, he says⁷ that, thinking it unworthy of the honour of the Roman people to waft over his army in vessels, he built a bridge

¹ Suetonius, in *Vitâ*, c. 67

² Idem, *ibid.*

³ Idem, *ibid.*

⁴ “In the waters of the Rhine Cæsar was my general, here [at Rome] he is my fellow. Crime levels those whom it polluted.”—Lucan, v. 289

⁵ Suetonius, *Life of Augustus*, c. 25.

⁶ Suetonius, in *Vitâ*, c. 69.

⁷ *De Bello Gall.*, iv. 17.

that they might pass over dry-foot. There it was that he built that wonderful bridge of which he gives so particular a description; for he nowhere so willingly dwells upon his actions as in representing to us the subtlety of his inventions in such kind of handiwork.

I have also observed this, that he set a great value upon his exhortations to the soldiers before the fight; for where he would show that he was either surprised or reduced to a necessity of fighting, he always brings in this, that he had not so much as leisure to harangue his army. Before that great battle with those of Tournay, "Cæsar," says he,¹ "having given order for everything else, presently ran where fortune carried him to encourage his people, and meeting with the tenth legion, had no more time to say anything to them but this, that they should remember their wonted valour; not to be astonished, but bravely sustain the enemy's encounter; and seeing the enemy had already approached within a dart's cast, he gave the signal for battle; and going suddenly thence elsewhere, to encourage others, he found that they were already engaged." Here is what he tells us in that place. His tongue, indeed, did him notable service upon several occasions, and his military eloquence was, in his own time, so highly reputed, that many of his army wrote down his harangues as he spoke them, by which means there were volumes of them collected that existed a long time after him. He had so particular a grace in speaking, that his intimates, and Augustus amongst others, hearing those orations read, could distinguish even to the phrases and words that were not his.²

The first time that he went out of Rome with

¹ *De Bello Gall.*, iv. 121.

² Suetonius, in *Vita*, c. 55

any public command, he arrived in eight days at the river Rhone, having with him in his coach a secretary or two before him who were continually writing, and him who carried his sword behind him.¹ And certainly, though a man did nothing but go on, he could hardly attain that promptitude with which, having been everywhere victorious in Gaul, he left it, and, following Pompey to Brundusium, in eighteen days' time he subdued all Italy; returned from Brundusium to Rome; from Rome went into the very heart of Spain, where he surmounted extreme difficulties in the war against Afranius and Petreius, and in the long siege of Marseilles, thence he returned into Macedonia, beat the Roman army at Pharsalia, passed thence in pursuit of Pompey into Egypt, which he also subdued; from Egypt he went into Syria and the territories of Pontus, where he fought Pharnaces; thence into Africa, where he defeated Scipio and Juba; again returned through Italy, where he defeated Pompey's sons:—

“Ocyor et cœli flammis, et tigride foëta.”²

“Ac veluti montis saxum de vertice præceps
Cum ruit avulsum vento, seu turbidus imber
Proluit, aut annis solvit sublapsa vetustas,
Fertur in abruptum magno mons improbus actu,
Exultatque solo, silvas, armenta, virosque,
Involvens secum”³

Speaking of the siege of Avaricum, he says,⁴ that it was his custom to be night and day with the

¹ Plutarch, *Lives of Cæsar*, c. 12

² “Swifter than lightning, or the cub-bearing tigress.”—Lucan, v. 405

³ “And as a stone torn from the mountain's top by the wind or rain torrents, or loosened by age, falls massive with mighty force, bounds here and there, in its course sweeps from the earth with it woods, herds, and men”—*Aeneid*, xii. 684

⁴ *De Bello Gall.*, vii. 24

pioneers. In all enterprises of consequence he always reconnoitred in person, and never brought his army into quarters till he had first viewed the place, and, if we may believe Suetonius, when he resolved to pass over into England, he was the first man that sounded the passage.¹

He was wont to say that he more valued a victory obtained by counsel than by force, and in the war against Petreius and Afranius, fortune presenting him with an occasion of manifest advantage, he declined it, saying,² that he hoped, with a little more time, but less hazard, to overthrow his enemies. He there also played a notable part in commanding his whole army to pass the river by swimming, without any manner of necessity:—

“Rapuitque ruens in prælia miles,
Quod fugiens timuisset, iter, mox uda receptis
Membra fovent armis, gelidosque à gurgite, cursu
Restituant artus”³

I find him a little more temperate and considerate in his enterprises than Alexander, for this man seems to seek and run headlong upon dangers like an impetuous torrent which attacks and rushes against everything it meets, without choice or discretion:—

“Sic tauriformis volvitur Aufidus,
Qui regna Dauni perfluit Appuli,
Dum sævit, horrendamque cultis
Diluviem meditatur agris”⁴,

¹ *In Vitâ*, c. 58

² *De Bello Civ.*, i. 72.

³ “The soldier rushing through a way to fight which he would have been afraid to have taken in flight then with their armour they cover wet limbs, and by running restore warmth to their numbed joints”—Lucan, iv. 151

⁴ “So the tauriform Aufidus, which flows through the realm of the Apulian Daunus, when raging, threatens a fearful deluge to the tilled ground”—Horat, *Od.*, iv. 14, 25.

and, indeed, he was a general in the flower and first heat of his youth, whereas Cæsar took up the trade at a ripe and well advanced age; to which may be added that Alexander was of a more sanguine, hot, and choleric constitution, which he also inflamed with wine, from which Cæsar was very abstinent.

But where necessary occasion required, never did any man venture his person more than he. so much so, that for my part, methinks I read in many of his exploits a determinate resolution to throw himself away to avoid the shame of being overcome. In his great battle with those of Tournay, he charged up to the head of the enemies without his shield, just as he was seeing the van of his own army beginning to give ground¹; which also several other times befell him. Hearing that his people were besieged, he passed through the enemy's army in disguise to go and encourage them with his presence.² Having crossed over to Dyrrachium with very slender forces, and seeing the remainder of his army which he had left to Antony's conduct slow in following him, he undertook alone to repass the sea in a very great storm,³ and privately stole away to fetch the rest of his forces, the ports on the other side being seized by Pompey, and the whole sea being in his possession. And as to what he performed by force of hand, there are many exploits that in hazard exceed all the rules of war; for with how small means did he undertake to subdue the kingdom of Egypt, and afterwards to attack the forces of Scipio and Juba, ten times greater than his own? These people had, I know not what, more than human confidence in their fortune; and he was wont to say that men

¹ *De Bello Galli*, ii 25

² Suetonius, in *Vita*, c 58
³ Idem, *ibid.*; Lucan, v 519

must embark, and not deliberate, upon high enterprises. After the battle of Pharsalia, when he had sent his army away before him into Asia, and was passing in one single vessel the strait of the Hellespont, he met Lucius Cassius at sea with ten tall men-of-war, when he had the courage not only to stay his coming, but to sail up to him and summon him to yield, which he did.¹

Having undertaken that furious siege of Alexia, where there were fourscore thousand men in garrison, all Gaul being in arms to raise the siege and having set an army on foot of a hundred and nine thousand horse,² and of two hundred and forty thousand foot, what a boldness and vehement confidence was it in him that he would not give over his attempt, but resolved upon two so great difficulties?—which nevertheless he overcame, and, after having won that great battle against those without, soon reduced those within to his mercy. The same happened to Lucullus at the siege of Tigranocerta against King Tigranes, but the condition of the enemy was not the same, considering the effeminacy of those with whom Lucullus had to deal. I will here set down two rare and extraordinary events concerning this siege of Alexia; one, that the Gauls having drawn their powers together to encounter Cæsar, after they had made a general muster of all their forces, resolved in their council of war to dismiss a good part of this great multitude, that they might not fall into confusion.³ This example of fearing to be too many is new; but, to take it right, it stands to reason that the body of an army should be of a

¹ Suetonius, *sib Vnde*, c 62

² Cæsar, *De Bello Galli*, vii 64, says *eight thousand horse only*.

³ Idem, *sibid*, vii 71

moderate greatness, and regulated to certain bounds, both out of respect to the difficulty of providing for them, and the difficulty of governing and keeping them in order. At least it is very easy to make it appear by example that armies monstrous in number have seldom done anything to purpose. According to the saying of Cyrus in Xenophon, "Tis not the number of men, but the number of good men, that gives the advantage": the remainder serving rather to trouble than assist. And Bajazet principally grounded his resolution of giving Tamerlane battle, contrary to the opinion of all his captains, upon this, that his enemies' numberless number of men gave him assured hopes of confusion. Scanderbeg, a very good and expert judge in such matters, was wont to say that ten or twelve thousand reliable fighting men were sufficient to a good leader to secure his regulation in all sorts of military occasions. The other thing I will here record, which seems to be contrary both to the custom and rules of war, is, that Vercingetorix, who was made general of all the parts of the revolted Gaul, should go shut up himself in Alexia¹: for he who has the command of a whole country ought never to shut himself up but in case of such last extremity that the only place he has left is in concern, and that the only hope he has left is in the defence of that city; otherwise he ought to keep himself always at liberty, that he may have the means to provide, in general, for all parts of his government.

To return to Cæsar. He grew, in time, more slow and more considerate, as his friend Oppius witnesses²: conceiving that he ought not lightly

¹ Cæsar, *De Bello Gall.*, vii 63.

² Suetonius, *Life of Cæsar*, c 6.

to hazard the glory of so many victories, which one blow of fortune might deprive him of. 'Tis what the Italians say, when they would reproach the rashness and foolhardiness of young people, calling them *Bisognosi d'onore*, "necessitous of honour," and that being in so great a want and dearth of reputation, they have reason to seek it at what price soever, which they ought not to do who have acquired enough already. There may reasonably be some moderation, some satiety, in this thirst and appetite of glory, as well as in other things: and there are enough people who practise it.

He was far remote from the religious scruples of the ancient Romans, who would never prevail in their wars but by dint of pure and simple valour, and yet he was more conscientious than we should be in these days, and did not approve all sorts of means to obtain a victory. In the war against Ariovistus, whilst he was parleying with him, there happened some commotion between the horsemen, which was occasioned by the fault of Ariovistus' light horse, wherein, though Cæsar saw he had a very great advantage of the enemy, he would make no use on't, lest he should have been reproached with a treacherous proceeding.¹

He was always wont to wear rich garments and of a shining colour in battle, that he might be the more remarkable and better observed.

He always carried a stricter and tighter hand over his soldiers when near an enemy.² When the ancient Greeks would accuse any one of extreme insufficiency, they would say, in common proverb, that he could neither read nor swim; he was of the same opinion, that swimming was

¹ *De Bello Gall.* . 46

² Suetonius, in *Vita*, c 65

of great use in war, and himself found it so ; for when he had to use diligence, he commonly swam over the rivers in his way, for he loved to march on foot, as also did Alexander the Great. Being in Egypt forced, to save himself, to go into a little boat, and so many people leaping in with him that it was in danger of sinking, he chose rather to commit himself to the sea, and swam to his fleet, which lay two hundred paces off, holding in his left hand his tablets, and drawing his coat-armour in his teeth, that it might not fall into the enemy's hand, and at this time he was of a pretty advanced age.¹

Never had any general so much credit with his soldiers : in the beginning of the civil wars, his centurions offered him to find every one a man-at-arms at his own charge, and the foot soldiers to serve him at their own expense ; those who were most at their ease, moreover, undertaking to defray the more necessitous.² The late Admiral Chastillon³ showed us the like example in our civil wars ; for the French of his army provided money out of their own purses to pay the foreigners that were with him. There are but rarely found examples of so ardent and so ready an affection amongst the soldiers of elder times, who kept themselves strictly to their rules of war. passion has a more absolute command over us than reason ; and yet it happened in the war against Hannibal, that by the example of the people of Rome in the city, the soldiers and captains refused their pay in the army, and in Marcellus' camp those were branded with the name of Mercenaries who

¹ Suetonius, in *Vita*, c 64.

² Idem, ibid, 68

³ Gaspard de Coligny, who fell in the St. Bartholomew massacre, 24th August 1572

would receive any. Having got the worst of it near Dyrrachium, his soldiers came and offered themselves to be chastised and punished, so that there was more need to comfort than reprove them.¹ One single cohort of his withstood four of Pompey's legions above four hours together, till they were almost all killed with arrows, so that there were a hundred and thirty thousand shafts found in the trenches.² A soldier called Scæva, who commanded at one of the avenues, invincibly maintained his ground, having lost an eye, with one shoulder and one thigh shot through, and his shield hit in two hundred and thirty places.³ It happened that many of his soldiers being taken prisoners, rather chose to die than promise to join the contrary side.⁴ Granius Petronius was taken by Scipio in Africa: Scipio having put the rest to death, sent him word that he gave him his life, for he was a man of quality and quæstor, to whom Petronius sent answer back, that Cæsar's soldiers were wont to give others their life, and not to receive it; and immediately with his own hand killed himself.⁵

Of their fidelity there are infinite examples: amongst them, that which was done by those who were besieged in Salona, a city that stood for Cæsar against Pompey, is not, for the rarity of an accident that there happened, to be forgotten. Marcus Octavius kept them close besieged; they within being reduced to the extremest necessity of all things, so that to supply the want of men, most of them being either slain or wounded, they

¹ Suetonius, *Life of Cæsar*, c 68

² Idem, *ibid.* Cæsar, *De Bello Gall.*, iii 53, makes the number thirty thousand only

³ Cæsar, *ibid.*, iii 53 Suetonius, *ibid.*, 68

⁴ Suetonius, *ibid.*, 68

⁵ Plutarch, *Life of Cæsar*, c 5.

had manumitted all their slaves, and had been constrained to cut off all the women's hair to make ropes for their war engines, besides a wonderful dearth of victuals, and yet continuing resolute never to yield. After having drawn the siege to a great length, by which Octavius was grown more negligent and less attentive to his enterprise, they made choice of one day about noon, and having first placed the women and children upon the walls to make a show, sallied upon the besiegers with such fury, that having routed the first, second, and third body, and afterwards the fourth, and the rest, and beaten them all out of their trenches, they pursued them even to their ships, and Octavius himself was fain to fly to Dyrrachium, where Pompey lay.¹ I do not at present remember that I have met with any other example where the besieged ever gave the besieger a total defeat and won the field, nor that a sortie ever achieved the result of a pure and entire victory.

CHAPTER XXXV

OF THREE GOOD WOMEN

THEY are not by the dozen, as every one knows, and especially in the duties of marriage, for that is a bargain full of so many nice circumstances that 'tis hard a woman's will should long endure such a restraint; men, though their condition be something better under that tie, have yet enough to do. The true touch and test of a happy marriage have respect to the time of the

¹ Cæsar, *De Bello Cw.*, iii. 9

companionship, if it has been constantly gentle, loyal, and agreeable. In our age, women commonly reserve the publication of their good offices, and their vehement affection towards their husbands, until they have lost them, or at least, till then defer the testimonies of their good will; a too slow testimony and unseasonable. By it they rather manifest that they never loved them till dead: their life is nothing but trouble; their death full of love and courtesy. As fathers conceal their affection from their children, women, likewise, conceal theirs from their husbands, to maintain a modest respect. This mystery is not for my palate; 'tis to much purpose that they scratch themselves and tear their hair. I whisper in a waiting-woman's or secretary's ear. "How were they, how did they live together?" I always have that good saying in my head:—

"*Jactantius mœrent, quæ minus dolent.*"¹

Their whimpering is offensive to the living and vain to the dead. We should willingly give them leave to laugh after we are dead, provided they will smile upon us whilst we are alive. Is it not enough to make a man revive in pure spite, that she, who spat in my face whilst I was in being, shall come to kiss my feet when I am no more? If there be any honour in lamenting a husband, it only appertains to those who smiled upon them whilst they had them; let those who wept during their lives laugh at their deaths, as well outwardly as within. Therefore, never regard those blubbered eyes and that pitiful voice; consider her deportment, her complexion, the plumpness of her cheeks under

¹ "They mourn the more ostentatiously, the less they grieve."—*Tacitus, Annal*, II. 77, writing of Germanicus

all those formal veils ; 'tis there she talks plain French. There are few who do not mend upon't, and health is a quality that cannot lie. That starched and ceremonious countenance looks not so much back as forward, and is rather intended to get a new husband than to lament the old. When I was a boy, a very beautiful and virtuous lady, who is yet living, the widow of a prince, wore somewhat more ornament in her dress than our laws of widowhood allow, and being reproached with it, she made answer, that it was because she was resolved to have no more love affairs, and would never marry again.

I have here, not at all dissenting from our customs, made choice of three women, who have also expressed the utmost of their goodness and affection about their husbands' deaths ; yet are they examples of another kind than are now in use, and so austere that they will hardly be drawn into imitation.

The younger Pliny¹ had near a house of his in Italy a neighbour who was exceedingly tormented with certain ulcers in his private parts. His wife seeing him so long to languish, entreated that he would give her leave to see and at leisure to consider of the condition of his disease, and that she would freely tell him what she thought. This permission being obtained, and she having curiously examined the business, found it impossible he could ever be cured, and that all he had to hope for or expect was a great while to linger out a painful and miserable life, and therefore, as the most sure and sovereign remedy, resolutely advised him to kill himself. But finding him a little tender and backward in so rude an attempt : " Do not think, my friend," said she, " that the torments I see

¹ *Ep.*, vi. 24.

thee endure are not as sensible to me as to thyself, and that to deliver myself from them, I will not myself make use of the same remedy I have prescribed to thee. I will accompany thee in the cure as I have done in the disease; fear nothing, but believe that we shall have pleasure in this passage that is to free us from so many miseries, and we will go happily together." Which having said, and roused up her husband's courage, she resolved that they should throw themselves headlong into the sea out of a window that overlooked it, and that she might maintain to the last the loyal and vehement affection wherewith she had embraced him during his life, she would also have him die in her arms; but lest they should fail, and should quit their hold in the fall through fear, she tied herself fast to him by the waist, and so gave up her own life to procure her husband's repose. This was a woman of mean condition, and, amongst that class of people, 'tis no very new thing to see some examples of rare virtue:—

"Extrema per illos
Justitia excedens terris vestigia fecit." ¹

The other two were noble and rich, where examples of virtue are rarely lodged.

Arria, the wife of Cæcina Pætus,² a consular person, was the mother of another Arria, the wife of Thrasea Pætus, he whose virtue was so renowned in the time of Nero, and by this son-in-law, the grandmother of Fannia: for the resemblance of the names of these men and women, and their fortunes, have led to several mistakes. This first Arria,

¹ "Justice, when she left the earth, took her last steps among them"—Virgil, *Georg.*, II. 473

² Pliny, *Ep.*, iii. 16.

her husband Cæcina Pætus, having been taken prisoner by some of the Emperor Claudius' people, after Scribonianus' defeat, whose party he had embraced in the war, begged of those who were to carry him prisoner to Rome, that they would take her into their ship, where she would be of much less charge and trouble to them than a great many persons they must otherwise have to attend her husband, and that she alone would undertake to serve him in his chamber, his kitchen, and all other offices. They refused, whereupon she put herself into a fisher-boat she hired on the spot, and in that manner followed him from Sclavonia. When she had come to Rome, Junia, the widow of Scribonianus, having one day, from the resemblance of their fortune, accosted her in the Emperor's presence; she rudely repulsed her with these words, "I," said she, "speak to thee, or give ear to anything thou sayest! to thee in whose lap Scribonianus was slain, and thou art yet alive!" These words, with several other signs, gave her friends to understand that she would undoubtedly despatch herself, impatient of supporting her husband's misfortune. And Thrasea, her son-in-law, beseeching her not to throw away herself, and saying to her, "What! if I should run the same fortune that Cæcina has done, would you that your daughter, my wife, should do the same?" "Would I?" replied she, "yes, yes, I would if she had lived as long, and in as good understanding with thee as I have done with my husband." These answers made them more careful of her, and to have a more watchful eye to her proceedings. One day, having said to those who looked to her: "'Tis to much purpose that you take all this pains to prevent me; you may indeed make me die an ill death, but to keep

obligation I have to you, I leave you at least the best thing I have, namely, the image of my life and manners, which I entreat you to keep in memory of me, that by so doing you may acquire the glory of sincere and real friends." And therewithal, one while appeasing the sorrow he saw in them with gentle words, and presently raising his voice to reprove them: "What," said he, "are become of all our brave philosophical precepts? What are become of all the provisions we have so many years laid up against the accidents of fortune? Is Nero's cruelty unknown to us? What could we expect from him who had murdered his mother and his brother, but that he should put his tutor to death who had brought him up?" After having spoken these words in general, he turned himself towards his wife, and embracing her fast in his arms, as, her heart and strength failing her, she was ready to sink down with grief, he begged of her, for his sake, to bear this accident with a little more patience, telling her, that now the hour was come wherein he was to show, not by argument and discourse, but effect, the fruit he had acquired by his studies, and that he really embraced his death, not only without grief, but moreover with joy. "Wherefore, my dearest," said he, "do not dishonour it with thy tears, that it may not seem as if thou lovest thyself more than my reputation. Moderate thy grief, and comfort thyself in the knowledge thou hast had of me and my actions, leading the remainder of thy life in the same virtuous manner thou hast hitherto done." To which Paulina, having a little recovered her spirits, and warmed the magnanimity of her courage with a most generous affection, replied, "No, Seneca," said she, "I am not a woman to suffer you to go

alone in such a necessity: I will not have you think that the virtuous examples of your life have not taught me how to die; and when can I ever better or more fittingly do it, or more to my own desire, than with you? and therefore assure yourself I will go along with you." Then Seneca, taking this noble and generous resolution of his wife in good part, and also willing to free himself from the fear of leaving her exposed to the cruelty of his enemies after his death: "I have, Paulina," said he, "instructed thee in what would serve thee happily to live; but thou more covetest, I see, the honour of dying: in truth, I will not grudge it thee; the constancy and resolution in our common end are the same, but the beauty and glory of thy part are much greater." Which being said, the surgeons, at the same time, opened the veins of both their arms, but as those of Seneca were more shrunk up, as well with age as abstinence, made his blood flow too slowly, he moreover commanded them to open the veins of his thighs; and lest the torments he endured might pierce his wife's heart, and also to free himself from the affliction of seeing her in so sad a condition, after having taken a very affectionate leave of her, he entreated she would suffer them to carry her into her chamber, which they accordingly did. But all these incisions being not yet enough to make him die, he commanded Statius Anneus, his physician, to give him a draught of poison, which had not much better effect, for by reason of the weakness and coldness of his limbs, it could not arrive at his heart. Wherefore they were forced to superadd a very hot bath, and then, feeling his end approach, whilst he had breath he continued excellent discourses upon the subject of

his present condition, which the secretaries wrote down so long as they could hear his voice, and his last words were long after in high honour and esteem amongst men, and it is a great loss to us that they have not come down to our times. Then, feeling the last pangs of death, with the bloody water of the bath he bathed his head, saying: "This water I dedicate to Jupiter the deliverer." Nero, being presently informed of all this, fearing lest the death of Paulina, who was one of the best-born ladies of Rome, and against whom he had no particular unkindness, should turn to his reproach, sent orders in all haste to bind up her wounds, which her attendants did without her knowledge, she being already half dead, and without all manner of sense. Thus, though she lived contrary to her own design, it was very honourably, and befitting her own virtue, her pale complexion ever after manifesting how much life had run from her veins.

These are my three very true stories, which I find as entertaining and as tragic as any of those we make out of our own heads wherewith to amuse the common people; and I wonder that they who are addicted to such relations, do not rather cull out ten thousand very fine stories, which are to be found in books, that would save them the trouble of invention, and be more useful and diverting; and he who would make a whole and connected body of them would need to add nothing of his own, but the connection only, as it were the solder of another metal; and might by this means embody a great many true events of all sorts, disposing and diversifying them according as the beauty of the work should require, after the same manner, almost, as Ovid has made up

his *Metamorphoses*¹ of the infinite number of various fables.

In the last couple, this is, moreover, worthy of consideration, that Paulina voluntarily offered to lose her life for the love of her husband, and that her husband had formerly also forborne to die for the love of her. We may think there is no just counterpoise in this exchange, but, according to his stoical humour, I fancy he thought he had done as much for her, in prolonging his life upon her account, as if he had died for her. In one of his letters to Lucilius, after he has given him to understand that, being seized with an ague in Rome, he presently took coach to go to a house he had in the country, contrary to his wife's opinion, who would have him stay, and that he had told her that the ague he was seized with was not a fever of the body but of the place, it follows thus: "She let me go," says he, "giving me a strict charge of my health. Now I, who know that her life is involved in mine, begin to make much of myself, that I may preserve her. And I lose the privilege my age has given me, of being more constant and resolute in many things, when I call to mind that in this old fellow there is a young girl who is interested in his health. And since I cannot persuade her to love me more courageously, she makes me more solicitously love myself: for we must allow something to honest affections, and, sometimes, though occasions importune us to the contrary, we must call back life, even though it be with torment: we must hold the soul fast in our teeth, since the rule of living, amongst good men, is not so long as they please, but as long as they

¹ The edition of 1588 has, "as Ariosto has ranged in a series that vast number of divers fables."

ought. He that loves not his wife nor his friend so well as to prolong his life for them, but will obstinately die, is too delicate and too effeminate: the soul must impose this upon itself, when the utility of our friends so requires; we must sometimes lend ourselves to our friends, and when we would die for ourselves must break that resolution for them. 'Tis a testimony of grandeur of courage to return to life for the consideration of another, as many excellent persons have done: and 'tis a mark of singular good nature to preserve old age (of which the greatest convenience is the indifference as to its duration, and a more stout and disdainful use of life), when a man perceives that this office is pleasing, agreeable, and useful to some person by whom he is very much beloved. And a man reaps by it a very pleasing reward; for what can be more delightful than to be so dear to his wife, as upon her account he shall become dearer to himself? Thus has my Paulina loaded me not only with her fears, but my own; it has not been sufficient to consider how resolutely I could die, but I have also considered how irresolutely she would bear my death. I am enforced to live, and sometimes to live in magnanimity." These are his own words, as excellent as they everywhere are.

CHAPTER XXXVI

OF THE MOST EXCELLENT MEN

IF I should be asked my choice among all the men who have come to my knowledge, I should make answer, that methinks I find three more excellent than all the rest.

One of them Homer: not that Aristotle and Varro, for example, were not, peradventure, as learned as he; nor that possibly Virgil was not equal to him in his own art, which I leave to be determined by such as know them both. I who, for my part, understand but one of them, can only say this, according to my poor talent, that I do not believe the Muses themselves could ever go beyond the Roman:—

“Tale facit carmen doctâ testudine, quale
Cynthius impositis temperat articulis”¹.

and yet in this judgment we are not to forget that it is chiefly from Homer that Virgil derives his excellence, that he is guide and teacher; and that one touch of the Iliad has supplied him with body and matter out of which to compose his great and divine Æneid. I do not reckon upon that, but mix several other circumstances that render to me this poet admirable, even as it were above human condition. And, in truth, I often wonder that he who has produced, and, by his authority, given reputation in the world to so many deities, was not deified himself. Being blind and poor, living before the sciences were reduced into rule and certain observation, he was so well acquainted with them, that all those who have since taken upon them to establish governments, to carry on wars, and to write either of religion or philosophy, of what sect soever, or of the arts, have made use of him as of a most perfect instructor in the knowledge of all things, and of his books as of a treasury of all sorts of learning:—

“Qui, quid sit pulcrum, quid turpe, quid utile, quid non,
Planius ac melius Chrysippo et Crantore dicit”².

¹ “He plays on his learned lute a verse such as Cynthian Apollo modulates with his imposed fingers”—Propertius, ii. 34, 79.

² “Who tells us what is good, what evil, what useful, what not, more clearly and better than Chrysippus and Crantor?”—Horace, *Ep.*, i. 2, 3.

and as this other says :—

“A quo, ceu fonte perenni,
Vatum Pieris ora rigantur aquis”¹,

and the other :—

“Addē Heliconiadum comites, quorum unus Homerus
Sceptra potitus”²;

and the other :—

“Cujusque ex ore profusos
Omnis posteritas latices in carmina duxit,
Amnemque in tenues ausa est deducere rivos.
Unius foecunda bonis”³—

‘Tis contrary to the order of nature that he has made the most excellent production that can possibly be ; for the ordinary birth of things is imperfect ; they thrive and gather strength by growing, whereas he rendered the infancy of poesy and several other sciences mature, perfect, and accomplished at first. And for this reason he may be called the first and the last of the poets, according to the fine testimony antiquity has left us of him, “that as there was none before him whom he could imitate, so there has been none since that could imitate him.”⁴ His words, according to Aristotle,⁵ are the only words that have motion and action, the only substantial words. Alexander the Great, having found a rich cabinet amongst Darius’ spoils, gave order it should be reserved for him to keep his Homer in,⁶ saying : that he was the best and most faithful

¹ “From which, as from a perennial spring, the lips of the poets are moistened by Pierian waters”—Ovid, *Amor*, iii 9, 25.

² “Add the companions of the Muses, whose sceptre Homer has solely obtained”—Lucretius, iii 1050.

³ “From whose mouth all posterity has drawn out copious streams of verse, and has made bold to turn the mighty river into its little rivulets, fertile in the property of one man.”—Manilius, *Astron*, ii 8

⁴ Velleius Paterculus, i 5

⁵ Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, vii. 29.

⁶ *Poetics*, c 24

counsellor he had in his military affairs.¹ For the same reason it was that Cleomenes, the son of Anaxandridas, said that he was the poet of the Lacedæmonians, for that he was an excellent master for the discipline of war.² This singular and particular commendation is also left of him in the judgment of Plutarch,³ that he is the only author in the world that never glutted nor disgusted his readers, presenting himself always another thing, and always flourishing in some new grace. That wanton Alcibiades, having asked one, who pretended to learning, for a book of Homer, gave him a box of the ear because he had none,⁴ which he thought as scandalous as we should if we found one of our priests without a Breviary. Xenophanes complained one day to Hiero, the tyrant of Syracuse, that he was so poor he had not wherewithal to maintain two servants. "What!" replied he, "Homer, who was much poorer than thou art, keeps above ten thousand, though he is dead."⁵ What did Panætius leave unsaid when he called Plato the Homer of the philosophers?⁶ Besides what glory can be compared to his? Nothing is so frequent in men's mouths as his name and works, nothing so known and received as Troy, Helen, and the war about her, when perhaps there was never any such thing. Our children are still called by names that he invented above three thousand years ago; who does not know Hector and Achilles? Not only some particular families, but most nations also seek their origin in his inventions. Mohammed,

¹ Plutarch, *Life of Alexander*, c. 2.

² Idem, *Apothegms of the Lacedæmonians*.

³ In his *Treatise on Loquacity*, c. 5, 8

⁴ Plutarch, *Life of Alcibiades*, c. 3.

⁵ Plutarch, *Apothegms of the Kings*, *Hiero*.

⁶ Cicero, *Tusc Quæss*, 1. 32.

the second of that name, emperor of the Turks, writing to our Pope Pius II., "I am astonished," says he, "that the Italians should appear against me, considering that we have our common descent from the Trojans, and that it concerns me as well as it does them to revenge the blood of Hector upon the Greeks, whom they countenance against me."¹ Is it not a noble farce wherein kings, republics, and emperors have so many ages played their parts, and to which the vast universe serves for a theatre? Seven Grecian cities contended for his birth, so much honour even his obscurity brought him :—

"Smyrna, Rhodos, Colophon, Salamis, Chios, Argos, Athenæ"²

The other³ is Alexander the Great. For whoever will consider the age at which he began his enterprises, the small means by which he effected so glorious a design, the authority he obtained in such mere youth with the greatest and most experienced captains of the world, by whom he was followed, the extraordinary favour wherewith fortune embraced and favoured so many hazardous, not to say rash, exploits :—

"Impellens quicquid sibi summa petenti
Obstaret, gaudensque viam fecisse ruinâ"⁴,

that greatness, to have at the age of three-and-thirty years, passed victorious through the whole habitable earth, and in half a life to have attained to the utmost of what human nature can do; so that you cannot imagine its just duration and the continuation of his increase in valour and fortune,

¹ The letter is, however, altogether problematical

² Aulus Gellius, iii. 11.

³ That is, Montaigne's second great man.

⁴ "Bearing down all who sought to withstand him, and pleased to force his way by ruin."—Lucan, i. 149.

up to a due maturity of age, but that you must withal imagine something more than man: to have made so many royal branches to spring from his soldiers, leaving the world, at his death, divided amongst four successors, simple captains of his army, whose posterity so long continued and maintained that vast possession; so many excellent virtues as he was master of,—justice, temperance, liberality, truth in his word, love towards his own people, and humanity towards those he overcame; for his manners, in general, seem in truth incapable of any manner of reproach, although some particular and extraordinary actions of his may fall under censure. But it is impossible to carry on such great things as he did within the strict rules of justice; such as he are to be judged in gross—by the main end of their actions. The ruin of Thebes, the murder of Menander and of Hephaestion's physician, of so many Persian prisoners at one time, of a troop of Indian soldiers not without prejudice to his word, and of the Coians, so much as to the very children, are indeed excesses that are not well to be excused.¹ For, as to Clytus, the fault was more than redeemed; and that very action, as much as any other whatever, manifests the goodness of his nature, a nature most excellently formed to goodness; and it was ingeniously said of him, that he had his virtues from Nature, his vices from Fortune.² As to his being a little given to bragging, a little too impatient of hearing himself ill-spoken of, and as to those mangers, arms, and bits he caused to be strewed in the Indies,³

¹ Plutarch, *Life of Alexander*, c 18 and 22, Quintus Curtius,
^x 4, 5.

² Quintus Curtius, x 5.

³ Plutarch, in *Vita*, c. 19; Diodorus Siculus, xvii. 95, &c

all those little vanities, methinks, may very well be allowed to his youth, and the prodigious prosperity of his fortune. And who will consider withal his so many military virtues, his diligence, foresight, patience, discipline, subtlety, magnanimity, resolution, and good fortune, wherein (though we had not had the authority of Hannibal to assure us) he was the first of men, the admirable beauty and symmetry of his person, even to a miracle, his majestic port and awful mien, in a face so young, ruddy, and radiant:—

“ *Qualis, ubi Oceani perfusus Lucifer unda,
Quem Venus ante alios astrorum diligit ignes,
Extulit os sacrum cœlo, tenebrasque resolvit* ”¹ ,

the excellence of his knowledge and capacity ; the duration and grandeur of his glory, pure, clean, without spot or envy, and that long after his death it was a religious belief that his very medals brought good fortune to all who carried them about them² ; and that more kings and princes have written his actions than other historians have written the actions of any other king or prince whatever, and that to this very day the Mohammedans, who despise all other histories, admit of and honour his alone, by a special privilege: whoever, I say, will seriously consider these particulars, will confess that, all these things put together, I had reason to prefer him before Cæsar himself, who alone could make me doubtful in my choice: and it cannot be denied that there was more of his own in his exploits, and more of fortune in those of Alexander. They were in many things equal,

¹ “ As when, bathed in the waves of Ocean, Lucifer, whom Venus loves beyond the other stars, has displayed his sacred countenance to the heaven, and disperses the darkness ”—*Aeneid*, III 589

² Trebellius Pollio, *Triginta Tyranni*, c. 14

and peradventure Cæsar had some greater qualities:— they were two fires, or two torrents, overrunning the world by several ways:—

“*Ac velut immissi diversis partibus ignes
Arentem in silvam, et virgulta sonantia lauro .
Aut ubi decursu rapido de montibus altis
Dant sonitum spumosi amnes, et in aequora currunt,
Quisque suum populatus iter*”¹.

but though Cæsar's ambition had been more moderate, it would still be so unhappy, having the ruin of his country and universal mischief to the world for its abominable object, that, all things raked together and put into the balance, I must needs incline to Alexander's side.

The third, and in my opinion the most excellent, is Epaminondas. Of glory he has not near so much as the other two (which, for that matter, is but a part of the substance of the thing): of valour and resolution, not of that sort which is pushed on by ambition, but of that which wisdom and reason can plant in a regular soul, he had all that could be imagined. Of this virtue of his, he has, in my idea, given as ample proof as Alexander himself or Cæsar. for although his warlike exploits were neither so frequent nor so full, they were yet, if duly considered in all their circumstances, as important, as bravely fought, and carried with them as manifest testimony of valour and military conduct, as those of any whatever. The Greeks have done him the honour, without contradiction, to pronounce him the greatest man of their nation²; and to be the first of Greece, is easily to be the first of the

¹ “And as fires applied in several parts to a dry wood and crackling shrubs of laurel, or as with impetuous fall from the steep mountains, foaming torrents pour down to the ocean, each clearing a destructive course.”—*Aeneid*, xii. 521

² Diodorus Siculus, xv 88, Pausanias, viii 114

world. As to his knowledge, we have this ancient judgment of him, "That never any man knew so much, and spake so little as he"¹; for he was of the Pythagorean sect; but when he did speak, never any man spake better; an excellent orator, and of powerful persuasion. But as to his manners and conscience, he infinitely surpassed all men who ever undertook the management of affairs; for in this one thing, which ought chiefly to be considered, which alone truly denotes us for what we are, and which alone I make counterbalance all the rest put together, he comes not short of any philosopher whatever, not even of Socrates himself. Innocence, in this man, is a quality peculiar, sovereign, constant, uniform, incorruptible, compared with which, it appears in Alexander subject to something else subaltern, uncertain, variable, effeminate, and fortuitous.

Antiquity has judged that in thoroughly sifting all the other great captains, there is found in every one some peculiar quality that illustrates his name: in this man only there is a full and equal virtue throughout, that leaves nothing to be wished for in him, whether in private or public employment, whether in peace or war; whether to live gloriously and grandly, and to die: I do not know any form or fortune of man that I so much honour and love.

'Tis true that I look upon his obstinate poverty, as it is set out by his best friends, as a little too scrupulous and nice; and this is the only feature, though high in itself and well worthy of admiration, that I find so rugged as not to desire to imitate, to the degree it was in him.

Scipio *Æ*Emilianus alone, could one attribute to him as brave and magnificent an end, and as pro-

¹ Plutarch, *On the Damon of Socrates*, c. 23.

found and universal a knowledge, might be put into the other scale of the balance. Oh, what an injury has time done me to deprive me of the sight of two of the most noble lives which, by the common consent of all the world, one of the greatest of the Greeks, and the other of the Romans, were in all Plutarch. What a matter! what a workman!

For a man that was no saint, but, as we say, a gentleman, of civilian and ordinary manners, and of a moderate ambition, the richest life that I know, and full of the richest and most to be desired parts, all things considered, is, in my opinion, that of Alcibiades.

But as to what concerns Epaminondas, I will here, for the example of an excessive goodness, add some of his opinions: he declared, that the greatest satisfaction he ever had in his whole life, was the contentment he gave his father and mother by his victory at Leuctra¹, wherein his deference is great, preferring their pleasure before his own, so just and so full of so glorious an action. He did not think it lawful, even to restore the liberty of his country, to kill a man without knowing a cause²: which made him so cold in the enterprise of his companion Pelopidas for the relief of Thebes. He was also of opinion that men in battle ought to avoid the encounter of a friend who was on the contrary side, and to spare him.³ And his humanity, even towards his enemies themselves, having rendered him suspected to the Boeotians, for that, after he had miraculously forced the Lacedaemonians to open to him the pass which they had undertaken to defend at the entrance into the Morea, near

¹ Plutarch, *Life of Coriolanus*, c. 2.

² Idem, *On the Demon of Socrates*, c. 4

³ Idem, *ibid*, c. 17

And Tamerlane, with a foolish humanity, palliated the fantastic cruelty he exercised upon lepers, when he put all he could hear of to death, to deliver them, as he pretended, from the painful life they lived. For there was not one of them who would not rather have been thrice a leper than be not. And Antisthenes the Stoic,¹ being very sick, and crying out, "Who will deliver me from these evils?" Diogenes, who had come to visit him, "This," said he, presenting him a knife, "soon enough, if thou wilt." "I do not mean from my life," he replied, "but from my sufferings." The sufferings that only attack the mind, I am not so sensible of as most other men; and this partly out of judgment, for the world looks upon several things as dreadful or to be avoided at the expense of life, that are almost indifferent to me: partly, through a dull and insensible complexion I have in accidents which do not point-blank hit me, and that insensibility I look upon as one of the best parts of my natural condition; but essential and corporeal pains I am very sensible of. And yet, having long since foreseen them, though with a sight weak and delicate and softened with the long and happy health and quiet that God has been pleased to give me the greatest part of my time, I had in my imagination fancied them so insupportable, that, in truth, I was more afraid than I have since found I had cause: by which I am still more fortified in this belief, that most of the faculties of the soul, as we employ them, more trouble the repose of life than they are any way useful to it.

I am in conflict with the worst, the most sudden, the most painful, the most mortal, and the most irremediable of all diseases; I have already had

¹ Or rather the Cynic See Diogenes Laertius, vi 18.

the trial of five or six very long and very painful fits ; and yet I either flatter myself, or there is even in this state what is very well to be endured by a man who has his soul free from the fear of death, and of the menaces, conclusions, and consequences which physic is ever thundering in our ears ; but the effect even of pain itself is not so sharp and intolerable as to put a man of understanding into rage and despair. I have at least this advantage by my stone, that what I could not hitherto prevail upon myself to resolve upon, as to reconciling and acquainting myself with death, it will perfect ; for the more it presses upon and importunes me, I shall be so much the less afraid to die. I had already gone so far as only to love life for life's sake, but my pain will dissolve this intelligence ; and God grant that in the end, should the sharpness of it be once greater than I shall be able to bear, it does not throw me into the other no less vicious extreme to desire and wish to die —

“ *Summum nec metuas diem, nec optes* ”¹

they are two passions to be feared ; but the one has its remedy much nearer at hand than the other.

As to the rest, I have always found the precept that so rigorously enjoins a resolute countenance and disdainful and indifferent comportment in the toleration of infirmities to be ceremonious. Why should philosophy, which only has respect to life and effects, trouble itself about these external appearances ? Let us leave that care to actors and masters of rhetoric, who set so great a value upon our gestures. Let her allow this vocal frailty

¹ “ *Thou shouldest neither fear nor desire the last day* ” — Martial, x. 47

to disease, if it be neither cordial nor stomachic, and permit the ordinary ways of expressing grief by sighs, sobs, palpitations, and turning pale, that nature has put out of our power, provided the courage be undaunted, and the tones not expressive of despair, let her be satisfied. What matter the wringing of our hands, if we do not wring our thoughts? She forms us for ourselves, not for others; to be, not to seem; let her be satisfied with governing our understanding, which she has taken upon her the care of instructing, that, in the fury of the colic, she maintain the soul in a condition to know itself, and to follow its accustomed way, contending with, and enduring, not meanly truckling under pain, moved and heated, not subdued and conquered, in the contention; capable of discourse and other things, to a certain degree. In such extreme accidents, 'tis cruelty to require so exact a composedness. 'Tis no great matter that we make a wry face, if the mind plays its part well: if the body find itself relieved by complaining, let it complain. if agitation ease it, let it tumble and toss at pleasure; if it seem to find the disease evaporate (as some physicians hold that it helps women in delivery) in making loud outcries, or if this do but divert its torments, let it roar as it will. Let us not command this voice to sally, but stop it not. Epicurus¹ not only forgives his sage for crying out in torments, but advises him to it:—

“Pugiles etiam, quum feriunt, in jactandis cæstibus ingemiscunt. quia profundendā voce omne corpus intenditur, venitque plaga vehementior.”²

¹ Diogenes Laertius, x 118.

² “Boxers also, when they strike, groan in the act, because with the strength of voice the whole body is carried, and the blow comes with the greater vehemence”—Cicero, *Tusc. Quæs.*, ii. 23.

We have enough to do to deal with the disease, without troubling ourselves with these superfluous rules.

Which I say in excuse of those whom we ordinarily see impatient in the assaults of this malady; for as to what concerns myself, I have passed it over hitherto with a little better countenance, and contented myself with groaning without roaring out; not, nevertheless, that I put any great constraint upon myself to maintain this exterior decorum, for I make little account of such an advantage: I allow herein as much as the pain requires, but either my pains are not so excessive, or I have more than ordinary patience. I complain, I confess, and am a little impatient in a very sharp fit, but I do not arrive to such a degree of despair as he who with—

“Ejulatu, questu, gemitu, fremitibus
Resonando, multum flebiles voces refert”¹

I try myself in the depth of my suffering,² and have always found that I was in a capacity to speak, think, and give a rational answer as well as at any other time, but not so firmly, being troubled and interrupted by the pain. When I am looked upon by my visitors to be in the greatest torment, and that they therefore forbear to trouble me, I often essay my own strength, and myself set some discourse on foot, the most remote I can contrive from my present condition. I can do anything upon a sudden endeavour, but it must not continue long. O what pity 'tis I have not the faculty of that dreamer in Cicero,³ who dreaming

¹ “Wailing, complaining, groaning, murmuring much avail lugubrious sounds”—Verses of Attius, in his *Philocleites*, quoted by Cicero, *De Finib.*, ii. 29; *Tusc. Quæs.*, ii. 14

² From the stone.

³ *De Divin.*, ii. 69

he was lying with a wench, found he had discharged his stone in the sheets. My pains strangely deaden my appetite that way. In the intervals from this excessive torment, when my ureters only languish without any great dolor, I presently feel myself in my wonted state, forasmuch as my soul takes no other alarm but what is sensible and corporal, which I certainly owe to the care I have had of preparing myself by meditation against such accidents :—

“ Non ulla laborum,
O virgo, nova mi facies inopinave surgit ;
Omnia præcepi, atque animo mecum antè peregri.”¹

I am, however, a little roughly handled for an apprentice, and with a sudden and sharp alteration, being fallen in an instant from a very easy and happy condition of life into the most uneasy and painful that can be imagined. For besides that it is a disease very much to be feared in itself, it begins with me after a more sharp and severe manner than it is used to do with other men. My fits come so thick upon me that I am scarcely ever at ease, yet I have hitherto kept my mind so upright that, provided I can still continue it, I find myself in a much better condition of life than a thousand others, who have no fewer nor other disease but what they create to themselves for want of meditation.

There is a certain sort of crafty humility that springs from presumption, as this, for example, that we confess our ignorance in many things, and are so courteous as to acknowledge that there are in the works of nature some qualities and

¹ “To me, O virgin, no new shape of suffering can arise new or unexpected ; I have anticipated all, and acted them over beforehand in my mind”—Æneid, vi 103.

conditions that are imperceptible to us, and of which our understanding cannot discover the means and causes; by this so honest and conscientious declaration we hope to obtain that people shall also believe us as to those that we say we do understand. We need not trouble ourselves to seek out foreign miracles and difficulties; methinks, amongst the things that we ordinarily see, there are such incomprehensible wonders as surpass all difficulties of miracles. What a wonderful thing it is that the drop of seed from which we are produced should carry in itself the impression not only of the bodily form, but even of the thoughts and inclinations of our fathers! Where can that drop of fluid matter contain that infinite number of forms? and how can they carry on these resemblances with so precarious and irregular a process that the son shall be like his great-grandfather, the nephew like his uncle? In the family of Lepidus at Rome there were three, not successively but by intervals, who were born with the same eye covered with a cartilage¹. At Thebes there was a race that carried from their mother's womb the form of the head of a lance, and he who was not born so was looked upon as illegitimate.² And Aristotle says that in a certain nation, where the women were in common, they assigned the children to their fathers by their resemblance.³

'Tis to be believed that I derive this infirmity from my father, for he died wonderfully tormented with a great stone in his bladder; he was never

¹ Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, vii. 12.

² "Plutarch, in his treatise of the persons whose punishment is delayed by God, chap. xix., but he does not say that those of this race, who had not this mark, as some had not, were deemed illegitimate."—*Coste*.

³ Herodotus, iv. 180

sensible of his disease till the sixty-seventh year of his age, and before that had never felt any menace or symptoms of it, either in his reins, sides, or any other part, and had lived, till then, in a happy, vigorous state of health, little subject to infirmities, and he continued seven years after in this disease, dragging on a very painful end of life. I was born about five-and-twenty years before his disease seized him, and in the time of his most flourishing and healthful state of body, his third child in order of birth where could his propensity to this malady lie lurking all that while? And he being then so far from the infirmity, how could that small part of his substance wherewith he made me, carry away so great an impression for its share? and how so concealed, that till five-and-forty years after, I did not begin to be sensible of it? being the only one to this hour, amongst so many brothers and sisters, and all by one mother, that was ever troubled with it He that can satisfy me in this point, I will believe him in as many other miracles as he pleases; always provided that, as their manner is, he do not give me a doctrine much more intricate and fantastic than the thing itself for current pay.

Let the physicians a little excuse the liberty I take, for by this same infusion and fatal insinuation it is that I have received a hatred and contempt of their doctrine; the antipathy I have against their art is hereditary. My father lived three-score and fourteen years, my grandfather sixty-nine, my great-grandfather almost fourscore years, without ever tasting any sort of physic; and, with them, whatever was not ordinary diet, was instead of a drug. Physic is grounded upon experience and examples: so is my opinion That is an

express and very advantageous experience. I do not know that they can find me in all their records three that were born, bred, and died under the same roof, who have lived so long by their conduct. They must here of necessity confess, that if reason be not, fortune at least is on my side, and with physicians, fortune goes for a great deal more than reason. Let them not take me now at a disadvantage, let them not threaten me in the prostrate condition wherein I now am; that were dishonesty. In truth, I have enough the better of them by these domestic examples, that they should rest satisfied. Human things are not usually so constant; it has been two hundred years, save eighteen, that this trial has lasted, for the first of them was born in the year 1402: 'tis now, indeed, very good reason that this experience should begin to fail us. Let them not, therefore, reproach me with the infirmities under which I now suffer; is it not enough that I for my part have lived seven-and-forty years in good health? though it should be the end of my career, 'tis of the longer sort.

My ancestors had an aversion to physic by some occult and natural instinct, for the very sight of drugs was loathsome to my father. The Seigneur de Gaviac, my uncle by the father's side, a churchman, and a valetudinarian from his birth, and yet who made that crazy life hold out to sixty-seven years, being once fallen into a furious fever, it was ordered by the physicians he should be plainly told that if he would not make use of help (for so they call that which is very often an obstacle), he would infallibly be a dead man. That good man, though terrified with this dreadful sentence, yet replied, "I am then a dead man." But God soon after made the prognostic false. The last of the brothers

—there were four of them—and by many years the last, the Sieur de Bussaguet, was the only one of the family who made use of medicine, by reason, I suppose, of the concern he had with the other arts, for he was a councillor in the court of Parliament, and it succeeded so ill with him, that being in outward appearance of the strongest constitution, he yet died long before any of the rest, save the Sieur de Saint Michel.

'Tis possible I may have derived this natural antipathy to physic from them; but had there been no other consideration in the case, I would have endeavoured to have overcome it; for all these conditions that spring in us without reason, are vicious; 'tis a kind of disease that we should wrestle with. It may be I had naturally this propension; but I have supported and fortified it by arguments and reasons which have established in me the opinion I am of. For I also hate the consideration of refusing physic for the nauseous taste: I should hardly be of that humour who hold health to be worth purchasing by all the most painful cauteries and incisions that can be applied. And, with Epicurus,¹ I conceive that pleasures are to be avoided, if greater pains be the consequence, and pains to be coveted, that will terminate in greater pleasures. Health is a precious thing, and the only one, in truth, meriting that a man should lay out, not only his time, sweat, labour, and goods, but also his life itself to obtain it; forasmuch as, without it, life is wearisome and injurious to us: pleasure, wisdom, learning, and virtue, without it, wither away and vanish; and to the most laboured and solid discourses that philosophy would imprint in us to the contrary, we need no more but oppose

¹ Cicero, *Tuscan. Quæs.*, v. 33. Diogenes Laertius, x. 129.

the image of Plato being struck with an epilepsy or apoplexy ; and, in this presupposition, to defy him to call the rich faculties of his soul to his assistance. All means that conduce to health can neither be too painful nor too dear to me. But I have some other appearances that make me strangely suspect all this merchandise. I do not deny but that there may be some art in it, that there are not amongst so many works of Nature, things proper for the conservation of health : that is most certain : I very well know there are some simples that moisten, and others that dry ; I experimentally know that radishes are windy, and senna-leaves purging ; and several other such experiences I have, as that mutton nourishes me, and wine warms me : and Solon said "that eating was physic against the malady hunger." I do not disapprove the use we make of things the earth produces, nor doubt, in the least, of the power and fertility of Nature, and of its application to our necessities : I very well see that pikes and swallows live by her laws, but I mistrust the inventions of our mind, our knowledge and art, to countenance which, we have abandoned Nature and her rules, and wherein we keep no bounds nor moderation. As we call the piling up of the first laws that fall into our hands justice, and their practice and dispensation very often foolish and very unjust ; and as those who scoff at and accuse it, do not, nevertheless, blame that noble virtue itself, but only condemn the abuse and profanation of that sacred title ; so in physic I very much honour that glorious name, its propositions, its promises, so useful for the service of mankind ; but the ordinances it foists upon us, betwixt ourselves, I neither honour nor esteem.

In the first place, experience makes me dread it; for amongst all my acquaintance, I see no people so soon sick, and so long before they are well, as those who take much physic; their very health is altered and corrupted by their frequent prescriptions. Physicians are not content to deal only with the sick, but they will moreover corrupt health itself, for fear men should at any time escape their authority. Do they not, from a continual and perfect health, draw the argument of some great sickness to ensue? I have been sick often enough, and have always found my sicknesses easy enough to be supported (though I have made trial of almost all sorts), and as short as those of any other, without their help, or without swallowing their ill-tasting doses. The health I have is full and free, without other rule or discipline than my own custom and pleasure. Every place serves me well enough to stay in, for I need no other conveniences, when I am sick, than what I must have when I am well. I never disturb myself that I have no physician, no apothecary, nor any other assistance, which I see most other sick men more afflicted at than they are with their disease. What! Do the doctors themselves show us more felicity and duration in their own lives, that may manifest to us some apparent effect of their skill?

There is not a nation in the world that has not been many ages without physic; and these the first ages, that is to say, the best and most happy; and the tenth part of the world knows nothing of it yet; many nations are ignorant of it to this day, where men live more healthful and longer than we do here, and even amongst us the common people live well enough without it. The Romans were six hundred years before they received it; and

after having made trial of it, banished it from the city at the instance of Cato the Censor,¹ who made it appear how easy it was to live without it, having himself lived fourscore and five years, and kept his wife alive to an extreme old age, not without physic, but without a physician: for everything that we find to be healthful to life may be called physic. He kept his family in health, as Plutarch says,² if I mistake not, with hare's milk; as Pliny reports,³ that the Arcadians cured all manner of diseases with that of a cow; and Herodotus says,⁴ the Lybians generally enjoy rare health, by a custom they have, after their children are arrived to four years of age, to burn and cauterise the veins of their head and temples, by which means they cut off all defluxions of rheum for their whole lives. And the country people of our province make use of nothing, in all sorts of distempers, but the strongest wine they can get, mixed with a great deal of saffron and spice, and always with the same success.

And to say the truth, of all this diversity and confusion of prescriptions, what other end and effect is there after all, but to purge the belly? which a thousand ordinary simples will do as well; and I do not know whether such evacuations be so much to our advantage as they pretend, and whether nature does not require a residence of her excrements to a certain proportion, as wine does of its lees to keep it alive: you often see healthful men fall into vomitings and fluxes of the belly by some extrinsic

¹ Pliny, *Nat Hist*, xxix. 1. He, however, says that physicians were not banished from Rome until long after the death of Cato

² *In Vstd*, c. 12

³ *Nat Hist*, xxv. 8.

⁴ Book iv, c 187. Herodotus, however, only says that by this means they profess to attain the end

accident, and make a great evacuation of excrements, without any preceding need, or any following benefit, but rather with hurt to their constitution. 'Tis from the great Plato,¹ that I lately learned, that of three sorts of motions which are natural to us, purging is the worst, and that no man, unless he be a fool, ought to take anything to that purpose but in the extremest necessity. Men disturb and irritate the disease by contrary oppositions ; it must be the way of living that must gently dissolve, and bring it to its end. The violent gripings and contest betwixt the drug and the disease are ever to our loss, since the combat is fought within ourselves, and that the drug is an assistant not to be trusted, being in its own nature an enemy to our health, and by trouble having only access into our condition. Let it alone a little ; the general order of things that takes care of fleas and moles, also takes care of men, if they will have the same patience that fleas and moles have, to leave it to itself. 'Tis to much purpose we cry out *Bihore!*² 'tis a way to make us hoarse, but not to hasten the matter. 'Tis a proud and uncompassionate order : our fears, our despair displease and stop it from, instead of inviting it to, our relief ; it owes its course to the disease, as well as to health ; and will not suffer itself to be corrupted in favour of the one to the prejudice of the other's right, for it would then fall into disorder. Let us, by God, follow it ; it leads those that follow, and those who will not follow, it drags along, both their fury and physic together.³ Order a purge for your brain, it will there be much better employed than upon your stomach.

One asking a Lacedæmonian what had made him

¹ In the *Timæus*.

² A term used by the Languedoc waggoners to hasten their horses.

³ Seneca, *Epf*, 107.

live so long, he made answer, "the ignorance of physic"; and the Emperor Adrian continually exclaimed as he was dying, that the crowd of physicians had killed him.¹ A bad wrestler turned physician: "Courage," says Diogenes to him; "thou hast done well, for now thou will throw those who have formerly thrown thee."² But they have this advantage, according to Nicocles, that the sun gives light to their success and the earth covers their failures.³ And, besides, they have a very advantageous way of making use of all sorts of events. for what fortune, nature, or any other cause (of which the number is infinite), produces of good and healthful in us, it is the privilege of physic to attribute to itself; all the happy successes that happen to the patient, must be thence derived; the accidents that have cured me, and a thousand others, who do not employ physicians, physicians usurp to themselves: and as to ill accidents, they either absolutely disown them, in laying the fault upon the patient, by such frivolous reasons as they are never at a loss for; as "he lay with his arms out of bed," or "he was disturbed with the rattling of a coach":—

"—*thedarum transitus arcto*
Vicorum inflexu"⁴

or "somebody had set open the casement," or "he had lain upon his left side": or "he had some disagreeable fancies in his head": in sum, a word, a dream, or a look, seems to them excuse sufficient wherewith to palliate their own errors: or, if they

¹ Xiphilinus or Trebizond, *Epitome of Dion Cassius* (in the *Life of Adrian*)

² Diogenes Laertius, vi. 62

³ Collection of the Monks Antonius and Maximus, c. 146

⁴ "The passage of the wheels in the narrow turning of the street"—Juvenal, iii. 236

so please, they even make use of our growing worse, and do their business in this way which can never fail them. which is by buzzing us in the ear, when the disease is more inflamed by their medicaments, that it had been much worse but for those remedies ; he, whom from an ordinary cold they have thrown into a double tertian-ague, had but for them been in a continued fever. They do not much care what mischief they do, since it turns to their own profit. In earnest, they have reason to require a very favourable belief from their patients ; and, indeed, it ought to be a very easy one, to swallow things so hard to be believed. Plato said¹ very well, that physicians were the only men who might lie at pleasure, since our health depends upon the vanity and falsity of their promises

Æsop, a most excellent author, and of whom few men discover all the graces, pleasantly represents to us the tyrannical authority physicians usurp over poor creatures, weakened and subdued by sickness and fear, when he tells us,² that a sick person, being asked by his physician what operation he found of the potion he had given him : "I have sweated very much," says the sick man. "That's good," says the physician. Another time, having asked how he felt himself after his physic : "I have been very cold, and have had a great shivering upon me," said he. "That is good," replied the physician. After the third potion, he asked him again how he did : "Why, I find myself swollen and puffed up," said he, "as if I had a dropsy." "That is very well," said the physician. One of his servants coming presently after to inquire how he felt himself, "Truly, friend," said he, "with being too well I am about to die."

¹ In the *Republic*, iii.

² Fable 13.

There was a more just law in Egypt, by which the physician, for the three first days, was to take charge of his patient at the patient's own risk and cost ; but, those three days being past, it was to be at his own. For what reason is it that their patron, *Æsculapius*, should be struck with thunder for restoring Hippolitus from death to life :—

“Tum Pater omnipotens, aliquem indignatus ab umbris
Mortalem infernis ad lumina surgere vitæ,
Ipse repertorem medicinæ talis, et artis
Fulmine Phœbigenam Stygias detrusit ad undas”¹,

and his followers be pardoned, who send so many souls from life to death ? A physician, boasting to Nicocles that his art was of great authority . “ It is so, indeed,” said Nicocles, “ that can with impunity kill so many people.”²

As to what remains, had I been of their counsel, I would have rendered my discipline more sacred and mysterious ; they begun well, but they have not ended so. It was a good beginning to make gods and demons the authors of their science, and to have used a peculiar way of speaking and writing, notwithstanding that philosophy concludes it folly to persuade a man to his own good by an unintelligible way : “ Ut si quis medicus imperet, ut sumat ” :—

“Terrigenam, herbigradam, domimportam, sanguine cassam”³

¹ “Then the Almighty Father, offended that any mortal should rise to the light of life from the infernal shades, struck the son of Phœbus with his forked lightning to the Stygian lake.”—*Aeneid*, vii 770

² “In p 622, chap 146, of the Collection of the Monks, just mentioned, printed at the end of Stobæus Barbeyrac thinks that this Nicocles, who here banter a certain quack, is the famous King of Salamis, to whom Socrates addressed one of his orations”—*Coste*.

³ Cicero, *De Dñs*, i 2 “Describing it by the epithets of an animal trailing with its slime over the herbage, without blood or bones, and carrying its house upon its back, meaning simply a snail.”—*Coste*.

It was a good rule in their art, and that accompanies all other vain, fantastic, and supernatural arts, that the patient's belief should prepossess them with good hope and assurance of their effects and operation : a rule they hold to that degree, as to maintain that the most inexpert and ignorant physician is more proper for a patient who has confidence in him, than the most learned and experienced whom he is not so acquainted with. Nay, even the very choice of most of their drugs is in some sort mysterious and divine ; the left foot of a tortoise, the urine of a lizard, the dung of an elephant, the liver of a mole, blood drawn from under the right wing of a white pigeon ; and for us who have the stone (so scornfully they use us in our miseries) the excrement of rats beaten to powder, and such like trash and fooleries which rather carry a face of magical enchantment than of any solid science I omit the odd number of their pills, the destination of certain days and feasts of the year, the superstition of gathering their simples at certain hours, and that so austere and very wise countenance and carriage which Pliny himself so much derides. But they have, as I said, failed in that they have not added to this fine beginning the making their meetings and consultations more religious and secret, where no profane person should have admission, no more than in the secret ceremonies of Æsculapius ; for by the reason of this it falls out that their irresolution, the weakness of their arguments, divinations and foundations, the sharpness of their disputes,¹ full of hatred, jealousy, and self-consideration, coming to be discovered by every one, a man must be marvelously blind not to see that he runs a very great hazard in their hands. Who ever saw one physician

¹ Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, xxix. 1.

approve of another's prescription, without taking something away, or adding something to it? by which they sufficiently betray their tricks, and make it manifest to us that they therein more consider their own reputation, and consequently their profit, than their patient's interest. He was a much wiser man of their tribe, who of old gave it as a rule, that only one physician should undertake a sick person; for if he do nothing to purpose, one single man's default can bring no great scandal upon the art of medicine; and, on the contrary, the glory will be great if he happen to have success; whereas, when there are many, they at every turn bring a disrepute upon their calling, forasmuch as they oftener do hurt than good. They ought to be satisfied with the perpetual disagreement which is found in the opinions of the principal masters and ancient authors of this science, which is only known to men well read, without discovering to the vulgar the controversies and various judgments which they still nourish and continue amongst themselves.

Will you have one example of the ancient controversy in physic? Herophilus¹ lodges the original cause of all diseases in the humours; Erasistratus, in the blood of the arteries; Asclepiades, in the invisible atoms of the pores; Alcmaeon, in the exuberance or defect of our bodily strength; Diocles, in the inequality of the elements of which the body is composed, and in the quality of the air we breathe; Strato, in the abundance, crudity, and corruption of the nourishment we take; and Hippocrates lodges it in the spirits. There is a certain friend of theirs,² whom they know better than I, who declares upon this subject, "that the most important science in practice amongst us, as that

¹ Celsus, *Preface to the First Book.*

² Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, xxix 1.

which is intrusted with our health and conservation, is, by ill-luck, the most uncertain, the most perplexed, and agitated with the greatest mutations." There is no great danger in our mistaking the height of the sun, or the fraction of some astronomical supputation ; but here, where our whole being is concerned, 'tis not wisdom to abandon ourselves to the mercy of the agitation of so many contrary winds.

Before the Peloponnesian war there was no great talk of this science. Hippocrates brought it into repute ; whatever he established, Chrysippus overthrew ; after that, Erasistratus, Aristotle's grandson, overthrew what Chrysippus had written , after these, the Empirics started up, who took a quite contrary way to the ancients in the management of this art , when the credit of these began a little to decay, Herophilus set another sort of practice on foot, which Asclepiades in turn stood up against, and overthrew ; then, in their turn, the opinions first of Themiso, and then of Musa, and after that those of Vectius Valens, a physician famous through the intelligence he had with Messalina, came in vogue ; the empire of physic in Nero's time was established in Thessalus, who abolished and condemned all that had been held till his time ; this man's doctrine was refuted by Crinas of Marseilles, who first brought all medicinal operations under the Ephemerides and motions of the stars, and reduced eating, sleeping, and drinking to hours that were most pleasing to Mercury and the moon ; his authority was soon after supplanted by Charinus, a physician of the same city of Marseilles, a man who not only controverted all the ancient methods of physic, but moreover the usage of hot baths, that had been generally and for so many ages in common use ;

he made men bathe in cold water, even in winter, and plunged his sick patients in the natural waters of streams. No Roman till Pliny's time had ever vouchsafed to practise physic ; that office was only performed by Greeks and foreigners, as 'tis now amongst us French, by those who sputter Latin ; for, as a very great physician says, we do not easily accept the medicine we understand, no more than we do the drugs we ourselves gather. If the nations whence we fetch our guaiacum, sarsaparilla, and China wood, have physicians, how great a value must we imagine, by the same recommendation of strangeness, rarity, and dear purchase, do they set upon our cabbage and parsley ? for who would dare to contemn things so far fetched, and sought out at the hazard of so long and dangerous a voyage ?

Since these ancient mutations in physic, there have been infinite others down to our own times, and, for the most part, mutations entire and universal, as those, for example, produced by Paracelsus, Fioravanti, and Argentier ; for they, as I am told, not only alter one recipe, but the whole contexture and rules of the body of physic, accusing all others of ignorance and imposition who have practised before them. At this rate, in what a condition the poor patient must be, I leave you to judge.

If we were even assured that, when they make a mistake, that mistake of theirs would do us no harm, though it did us no good, it were a reasonable bargain to venture the making ourselves better without any danger of being made worse. Æsop tells a story,¹ that one who had bought a Morisco slave, believing that his black complexion had

¹ Fable 76.

arrived by accident and the ill usage of his former master, caused him to enter with great care into a course of baths and potions: it happened that the Moor was nothing amended in his tawny complexion, but he wholly lost his former health. How often do we see physicians impute the death of their patients to one another? I remember that some years ago there was an epidemical disease, very dangerous and for the most part mortal, that raged in the towns about us the storm being over which had swept away an infinite number of men, one of the most famous physicians of all the country, presently after published a book upon that subject, wherein, upon better thoughts, he confesses that the letting blood in that disease was the principal cause of so many mishaps. Moreover, their authors hold that there is no physic that has not something hurtful in it. And if even those of the best operation in some measure offend us, what must those do that are totally misapplied? For my own part, though there were nothing else in the case, I am of opinion, that to those who loathe the taste of physic, it must needs be a dangerous and prejudicial endeavour to force it down at so incommodious a time, and with so much aversion, and believe that it marvellously distempers a sick person at a time when he has so much need of repose. And moreover, if we but consider the occasions upon which they usually ground the cause of our diseases, they are so light and nice, that I thence conclude a very little error in the dispensation of their drugs may do a great deal of mischief. Now, if the mistake of a physician be so dangerous, we are in but a scurvy condition; for it is almost impossible but he must often fall into those mistakes: he had need of too many parts, considerations, and circum-

stances, rightly to level his design : he must know the sick person's complexion, his temperament, his humours, inclinations, actions, nay, his very thoughts and imaginations ; he must be assured of the external circumstances, of the nature of the place, the quality of the air and season, the situation of the planets, and their influences : he must know in the disease, the causes, prognostics, affections, and critical days ; in the drugs, the weight, the power of working, the country, figure, age, and dispensation, and he must know how rightly to proportion and mix them together, to beget a just and perfect symmetry ; wherein if there be the least error, if amongst so many springs there be but any one out of order, 'tis enough to destroy us. God knows with how great difficulty most of these things are to be understood : for (for example) how shall a physician find out the true sign of the disease, every disease being capable of an infinite number of indications ? How many doubts and controversies have they amongst themselves upon the interpretation of urines ? otherwise, whence should the continual debates we see amongst them about the knowledge of the disease proceed ? how could we excuse the error they so oft fall into, of taking fox for marten ? In the diseases I have had, though there were ever so little difficulty in the case, I never found three of one opinion : which I instance, because I love to introduce examples wherein I am myself concerned.

A gentleman at Paris was lately cut for the stone by order of the physicians, in whose bladder, being accordingly so cut, there was found no more stone than in the palm of his hand ; and in the same place a bishop, who was my particular friend, having been earnestly pressed by the majority of the physicians

whom he consulted, to suffer himself to be cut, to which also, upon their word, I used my interest to persuade him, when he was dead and opened, it appeared that he had no malady but in the kidneys. They are least excusable for any error in this disease, by reason that it is in some sort palpable; and 'tis thence that I conclude surgery to be much more certain, by reason that it sees and feels what it does, and so goes less upon conjecture; whereas the physicians have no *speculum matricis*, by which to examine our brains, lungs, and liver.

Even the very promises of physic are incredible in themselves, for, having to provide against divers and contrary accidents that often afflict us at one and the same time, and that have almost a necessary relation, as the heat of the liver and the coldness of the stomach, they will needs persuade us, that of their ingredients one will heat the stomach and the other will cool the liver: one has its commission to go directly to the kidneys, nay, even to the bladder, without scattering its operations by the way, and is to retain its power and virtue through all those turns and meanders, even to the place to the service of which it is designed, by its own occult property: this will dry the brain, that will moisten the lungs. Of all this bundle of things having mixed up a potion, is it not a kind of madness to imagine or to hope that these differing virtues should separate themselves from one another in this mixture and confusion, to perform so many various errands? I should very much fear that they would either lose or change their tickets, and disturb one another's quarters. And who can imagine but that, in this liquid confusion, these faculties must corrupt, confound, and spoil one another? And is not the danger still more when the making up of this

medicine is entrusted to the skill and fidelity of still another, to whose mercy we again abandon our lives?

As we have doublet and breeches-makers, distinct trades, to clothe us, and are so much the better fitted, seeing that each of them meddles only with his own business, and has less to trouble his head with than the tailor who undertakes all, and as in matter of diet, great persons, for their better convenience, and to the end they may be better served, have cooks for the different offices, this for soups and potages, that for roasting, instead of which if one cook should undertake the whole service, he could not so well perform it; so also as to the cure of our maladies. The Egyptians had reason to reject this general trade of physician, and to divide the profession: to each disease, to each part of the body, its particular workman¹; for that part was more properly and with less confusion cared for, seeing the person looked to nothing else. Ours are not aware that he who provides for all, provides for nothing; and that the entire government of this microcosm is more than they are able to undertake. Whilst they were afraid of stopping a dysentery, lest they should put the patient into a fever, they killed me a friend,² who was worth more than the whole of them. They counterpoise their own divinations with the present evils; and because they will not cure the brain to the prejudice of the stomach, they injure both with their dissentient and tumultuary drugs.

As to the variety and weakness of the rationale of this art, they are more manifest in it than in any other art; aperitive medicines are proper for a man subject to the stone, by reason that opening

¹ Herodotus, ii 84

² Etienne de la Boetie.

and dilating the passages they help forward the slimy matter whereof gravel and stone are engendered, and convey that downward which begins to harden and gather in the reins; aperitive things are dangerous for a man subject to the stone, by reason that, opening and dilating the passages, they help forward the matter proper to create the gravel toward the reins, which by their own propension being apt to seize it, 'tis not to be imagined but that a great deal of what has been conveyed thither must remain behind; moreover, if the medicine happen to meet with anything too large to be carried through all the narrow passages it must pass to be expelled, that obstruction, whatever it is, being stirred by these aperitive things and thrown into those narrow passages, coming to stop them, will occasion a certain and most painful death. They have the like uniformity in the counsels they give us for the regimen of life it is good to make water often; for we experimentally see that, in letting it lie long in the bladder, we give it time to settle the sediment, which will concrete into a stone¹; it is good not to make water often, for the heavy excrements it carries along with it will not be voided without violence, as we see by experience that a torrent that runs with force washes the ground it rolls over much cleaner than the course of a slow and tardy stream; so, it is good to have often to do with women, for that opens the passages and helps to evacuate gravel; it is also very ill to have often to do with women, because it heats, tires, and weakens the reins. It is good to bathe frequently in hot water, forasmuch as that relaxes

¹ A sound opinion and piece of advice, which are not even yet generally appreciated. Certain callings are more prone to this disease from the want of opportunities for relieving nature

and mollifies the places where the gravel and stone lie ; it is also ill by reason that this application of external heat helps the reins to bake, harden, and petrify the matter so disposed. For those who are taking baths it is most healthful to eat little at night, to the end that the waters they are to drink the next morning may have a better operation upon an empty stomach ; on the other hand, it is better to eat little at dinner, that it hinder not the operation of the waters, while it is not yet perfect, and not to oppress the stomach so soon after the other labour, but leave the office of digestion to the night, which will much better perform it than the day, when the body and soul are in perpetual moving and action. Thus do they juggle and trifle in all their discourses at our expense , and they could not give me one proposition against which I should not know how to raise a contrary of equal force. Let them, then, no longer exclaim against those who in this trouble of sickness suffer themselves to be gently guided by their own appetite and the advice of nature, and commit themselves to the common fortune.

I have seen in my travels almost all the famous baths of Christendom, and for some years past have begun to make use of them myself : for I look upon bathing as generally wholesome, and believe that we suffer no little inconveniences in our health by having left off the custom that was generally observed, in former times, almost by all nations, and is yet in many, of bathing every day ; and I cannot imagine but that we are much the worse by having our limbs crusted and our pores stopped with dirt. And as to the drinking of them, fortune has in the first place rendered them not at all unacceptable to my taste ; and secondly, they are

and the other:—

“Lotus nobiscum est, hilaris coenavit, et idem
 Inventus mane est mortuus Andragoras.
 Tam subitae mortis causam, Faustine, requiris?
 In somnis medicum viderat Hermocratem”¹

upon which I will relate two stories.

The Baron de Caupéne in Chalosse and I have betwixt us the advowson of a benefice of great extent, at the foot of our mountains, called Lahontan. It is with the inhabitants of this angle, as 'tis said of those of the Val d'Angrougne; they lived a peculiar sort of life, their fashions, clothes, and manners distinct from other people, ruled and governed by certain particular laws and usages, received from father to son, to which they submitted, without other constraint than the reverence to custom. This little state had continued from all antiquity in so happy a condition, that no neighbouring judge was ever put to the trouble of inquiring into their doings, no advocate was ever retained to give them counsel, no stranger ever called in to compose their differences; nor was ever any of them seen to go a-begging. They avoided all alliances and traffic with the outer world, that they might not corrupt the purity of their own government, till, as they say, one of them, in the memory of man, having a mind spurred on with a noble ambition, took it into his head, to bring his name into credit and reputation, to make one of his sons something more than ordinary, and having put him to learn to write in a neighbouring town, made him at last a brave village notary. This

¹ “Andragoras bathed with us, supped gaily, and in the morning the same was found dead. Dost thou ask, Faustinus, the cause of this so sudden death? In his dreams he had seen the physician Hermocrates”—Martial, vi 53

fellow, having acquired such dignity, began to disdain their ancient customs, and to buzz into the people's ears the pomp of the other parts of the nation ; the first prank he played was to advise a friend of his, whom somebody had offended by sawing off the horns of one of his goats, to make his complaint to the royal judges thereabout, and so he went on from one to another, till he had spoiled and confounded all. In the tail of this corruption, they say, there happened another, and of worse consequence, by means of a physician, who, falling in love with one of their daughters, had a mind to marry her and to live amongst them. This man first of all began to teach them the names of fevers, colds, and imposthumes ; the seat of the heart, liver, and intestines, a science till then utterly unknown to them ; and instead of garlic, with which they were wont to cure all manner of diseases, how painful or extreme soever, he taught them, though it were but for a cough or any little cold, to take strange mixtures, and began to make a trade not only of their health, but of their lives. They swear till then they never perceived the evening air to be offensive to the head ; that to drink when they were hot was hurtful, and that the winds of autumn were more unwholesome than those of spring ; that, since this use of physic, they find themselves oppressed with a legion of unaccustomed diseases, and that they perceive a general decay in their ancient vigour, and their lives are cut shorter by the half. This is the first of my stories.

The other is, that before I was afflicted with the stone, hearing that the blood of a he-goat was with many in very great esteem, and looked upon as a celestial manna rained down upon these latter ages for the good and preservation of the lives of men,

and having heard it spoken of by men of understanding for an admirable drug, and of infallible operation ; I, who have ever thought myself subject to all the accidents that can befall other men, had a mind, in my perfect health, to furnish myself with this miracle, and therefore gave order to have a goat fed at home according to the recipe : for he must be taken in the hottest month of all summer, and must only have aperitive herbs given him to eat, and white wine to drink. I came home by chance the very day he was to be killed ; and some one came and told me that the cook had found two or three great balls in his paunch, that rattled against one another amongst what he had eaten. I was curious to have all his entrails brought before me, where, having caused the skin that enclosed them to be cut, there tumbled out three great lumps, as light as sponges, so that they appeared to be hollow, but as to the rest, hard and firm without, and spotted and mixed all over with various dead colours ; one was perfectly round, and of the bigness of an ordinary ball ; the other two something less, of an imperfect roundness, as seeming not to be arrived at their full growth. I find, by inquiry of people accustomed to open these animals, that it is a rare and unusual accident. 'Tis likely these are stones of the same nature with ours : and if so, it must needs be a very vain hope in those who have the stone, to extract their cure from the blood of a beast that was himself about to die of the same disease. For to say that the blood does not participate of this contagion, and does not thence alter its wonted virtue, it is rather to be believed that nothing is engendered in a body but by the conspiracy and communication of all the parts : the whole mass works together, though one

part contributes more to the work than another, according to the diversity of operations, wherefore it is very likely that there was some petrifying quality in all the parts of this goat. It was not so much for fear of the future, and for myself, that I was curious in this experiment, but because it falls out in mine, as it does in many other families, that the women store up such little trumperies for the service of the people, using the same recipe in fifty several diseases, and such a recipe as they will not take themselves, and yet triumph when they happen to be successful.

As to what remains, I honour physicians, not according to the precept¹ for their necessity (for to this passage may be opposed another of the prophet reproving King Asa for having recourse to a physician), but for themselves, having known many very good men of that profession, and most worthy to be beloved. I do not attack them; 'tis their art I inveigh against, and do not much blame them for making their advantage of our folly, for most men do the same. Many callings, both of greater and of less dignity than theirs, have no other foundation or support than public abuse. When I am sick I send for them if they be near, only to have their company, and pay them as others do. I give them leave to command me to keep myself warm, because I naturally love to do it, and to appoint leeks or lettuce for my broth; to order me white wine or claret; and so as to all other things, which are indifferent to my palate and custom. I know very well that I do nothing for them in so doing, because sharpness and strangeness are incidents of the very essence of physic. Lycurgus ordered wine for the sick Spartans:

¹ Eccles. xxxvii. 1.

Why? because they abominated the drinking it when they were well; as a gentleman, a neighbour of mine, takes it as an excellent medicine in his fever, because naturally he mortally hates the taste of it. How many do we see amongst them of my humour, who despise taking physic themselves, are men of a liberal diet, and live a quite contrary sort of life to what they prescribe others? What is this but flatly to abuse our simplicity? for their own lives and health are no less dear to them than ours are to us, and consequently they would accommodate their practice to their rules, if they did not themselves know how false these are.

'Tis the fear of death and of pain, impatience of disease, and a violent and indiscreet desire of a present cure, that so blind us: 'tis pure cowardice that makes our belief so pliable and easy to be imposed upon: and yet most men do not so much believe as they acquiesce and permit, for I hear them find fault and complain as well as we; but they resolve at last, "What should I do then?" As if impatience were of itself a better remedy than patience. Is there any one of those who have suffered themselves to be persuaded into this miserable subjection, who does not equally surrender himself to all sorts of impostures? who does not give up himself to the mercy of whoever has the impudence to promise him a cure? The Babylonians carried their sick into the public square; the physician was the people: every one who passed by being in humanity and civility obliged to inquire of their condition, gave some advice according to his own experience.¹ We do little better; there is not so simple a woman, whose gossips and drenches we do not make use of: and

¹ Herodotus, i. 197.

according to my humour, if I were to take physic, I would sooner choose to take theirs than any other, because at least, if they do no good, they will do no harm. What Homer¹ and Plato said of the Egyptians, that they were all physicians, may be said of all nations ; there is not a man amongst any of them who does not boast of some rare recipe, and who will not venture it upon his neighbour, if he will let him. I was the other day in a company where one, I know not who, of my fraternity² brought us intelligence of a new sort of pills made up of a hundred and odd ingredients : it made us very merry, and was a singular consolation, for what rock could withstand so great a battery ? And yet I hear from those who have made trial of it, that the least atom of gravel deigned not to stir for't.

I cannot take my hand from the paper before I have added a word concerning the assurance they give us of the certainty of their drugs, from the experiments they have made.

The greatest part, I should say above two-thirds of the medicinal virtues, consist in the quintessence or occult property of simples, of which we can have no other instruction than use and custom ; for quintessence is no other than a quality of which we cannot by our reason find out the cause. In such proofs, those they pretend to have acquired by the inspiration of some *dæmon*, I am content to receive (for I meddle not with miracles) ; and also the proofs which are drawn from things that, upon some other account, often fall into use amongst us ; as if in the wool, wherewith we are wont to clothe ourselves, there has accidentally some occult desiccative

¹ *Odyssey*, iv. 231.

² "Meaning who were troubled with the stone."—Cotton.

property been found out of curing kibed heels, or as if in the radish we eat for food there has been found out some aperitive operation. Galen reports, that a man happened to be cured of a leprosy by drinking wine out of a vessel into which a viper had crept by chance. In this example we find the means and a very likely guide and conduct to this experience, as we also do in those that physicians pretend to have been directed to by the example of some beasts. But in most of their other experiments wherein they affirm they have been conducted by fortune, and to have had no other guide than chance, I find the progress of this information incredible. Suppose man looking round about him upon the infinite number of things, plants, animals, metals ; I do not know where he would begin his trial ; and though his first fancy should fix him upon an elk's horn, wherein there must be a very pliant and easy belief, he will yet find himself as perplexed in his second operation. There are so many maladies and so many circumstances presented to him, that before he can attain the certainty of the point to which the perfection of his experience should arrive, human sense will be at the end of its lesson : and before he can, amongst this infinity of things, find out what this horn is ; amongst so many diseases, what is epilepsy ; the many complexions in a melancholy person ; the many seasons in winter ; the many nations in the French ; the many ages in age ; the many celestial mutations in the conjunction of Venus and Saturn ; the many parts in man's body, nay, in a finger ; and being, in all this, directed neither by argument, conjecture, example, nor divine inspirations, but merely by the sole motion of fortune, it must be by a perfectly artificial, regular and methodical fortune. And after the

cure is performed, how can he assure himself that it was not because the disease had arrived at its period or an effect of chance? or the operation of something else that he had eaten, drunk, or touched that day? or by virtue of his grandmother's prayers? And, moreover, had this experiment been perfect, how many times was it repeated, and this long bead-roll of haps and concurrences strung anew by chance to conclude a certain rule? And when the rule is concluded, by whom, I pray you? Of so many millions, there are but three men who take upon them to record their experiments: must fortune needs just hit one of these? What if another, and a hundred others, have made contrary experiments? We might, peradventure, have some light in this, were all the judgments and arguments of men known to us; but that three witnesses, three doctors, should lord it over all mankind, is against reason. it were necessary that human nature should have deputed and chosen them out, and that they were declared our comptrollers by express procuration:—

"To MADAME DE DURAS.¹

"MADAME, — The last time you honoured me with a visit, you found me at work upon this chapter, and as these trifles may one day fall into your hands, I would also that they testify in how great honour the author will take any favour you shall please to show them. You will there find the same air and mien you have observed in his

¹ Marguerite de Grammont, widow of Jean de Durfort, Seigneur de Duras, who was killed near Leghorn, leaving no posterity. Montaigne seems to have been on terms of considerable intimacy with her, and to have tendered her some very wholesome and frank advice in regard to her relations with Henry IV.

conversation ; and though I could have borrowed some better or more favourable garb than my own, I would not have done it : for I require nothing more of these writings, but to present me to your memory such as I naturally am. The same conditions and faculties you have been pleased to frequent and receive with much more honour and courtesy than they deserve, I would put together (but without alteration or change) in one solid body, that may peradventure continue some years, or some days, after I am gone ; where you may find them again when you shall please to refresh your memory, without putting you to any greater trouble ; neither are they worth it. I desire you should continue the favour of your friendship to me, by the same qualities by which it was acquired.

“ I am not at all ambitious that any one should love and esteem me more dead than living. The humour of Tiberius¹ is ridiculous, but yet common, who was more solicitous to extend his renown to posterity than to render himself acceptable to men of his own time. If I were one of those to whom the world could owe commendation, I would give out of it one-half to have the other in hand ; let their praises come quick and crowding about me, more thick than long, more full than durable ; and let them cease, in God’s name, with my own knowledge of them, and when the sweet sound can no longer pierce my ears. It were an idle humour to essay, now that I am about to forsake the commerce of men, to offer myself to them by a new recommendation. I make no account of the goods I could not employ in the service of my life. Such as I am, I will be elsewhere than in paper : my art and industry have been ever directed

¹ Tacitus, *Annal.*, vi. 46.

to render myself good for something ; my studies, to teach me to do, and not to write. I have made it my whole business to frame my life : this has been my trade and my work ; I am less a writer of books than anything else. I have coveted understanding for the service of my present and real conveniences, and not to lay up a stock for my posterity. He who has anything of value in him, let him make it appear in his conduct, in his ordinary discourses, in his courtships, and his quarrels : in play, in bed, at table, in the management of his affairs, in his economics. Those whom I see make good books in ill breeches, should first have mended their breeches, if they would have been ruled by me. Ask a Spartan whether he had rather be a good orator or a good soldier : and if I was asked the same question, I would rather choose to be a good cook, had I not one already to serve me. My God ! Madame, how should I hate such a recommendation of being a clever fellow at writing, and an ass and an inanity in everything else ! Yet I had rather be a fool both here and there than to have made so ill a choice wherein to employ my talent. And I am so far from expecting to gain any new reputation by these follies, that I shall think I come off pretty well if I lose nothing by them of that little I had before. For besides that this dead and mute painting will take from my natural being, it has no resemblance to my better condition, but is much lapsed from my former vigour and cheerfulness, growing faded and withered : I am towards the bottom of the barrel, which begins to taste of the lees.

“ As to the rest, Madame, I should not have dared to make so bold with the mysteries of physic,

considering the esteem that you and so many others have of it, had I not had encouragement from their own authors. I think there are of these among the old Latin writers but two, Pliny and Celsus: if these ever fall into your hands, you will find that they speak much more rudely of their art than I do; I but pinch it, they cut its throat. ^cPliny,¹ amongst other things, twits them with this, (that when they are at the end of their rope, they have a pretty device to save themselves, by recommending their patients, whom they have teased and tormented with their drugs and diets to no purpose, some to vows and miracles, others to the hot baths. (Be not angry, Madame; he speaks not of those in our parts, which are under the protection of your house, and all Gramontins.) They have a third way of saving their own credit, of ridding their hands of us and securing themselves from the reproaches we might cast in their teeth of our little amendment, when they have had us so long in their hands that they have not one more invention left wherewith to amuse us, which is to send us to the better air of some other country. This, Madame, is enough; I hope you will give me leave to return to my discourse, from which I have so far digressed, the better to divert you."

It was, I think, Pericles,² who being asked how he did: "You may judge," says he, "by these," showing some little scrolls of parchment he had tied about his neck and arms.³ By which he would infer that he must needs be very sick when he was reduced to a necessity of having recourse to

¹ *Nat. Hist.*, xxix 1

² Plutarch, in *Vita*, c. 24.
³ s.e. amulets.

such idle and vain fopperies, and of suffering himself to be so equipped. I dare not promise but that I may one day be so much a fool as to commit my life and death to the mercy and government of physicians; I may fall into such a frenzy; I dare not be responsible for my future constancy: but then, if any one ask me how I do, I may also answer, as Pericles did, "You may judge by this," shewing my hand clutching six drachms of opium. It will be a very evident sign of a violent sickness: my judgment will be very much out of order; if once fear and impatience get such an advantage over me, it may very well be concluded that there is a dreadful fever in my mind.

I have taken the pains to plead this cause, which I understand indifferently, a little to back and support the natural aversion to drugs and the practice of physic I have derived from my ancestors, to the end it may not be a mere stupid and inconsiderate aversion, but have a little more form; and also, that they who shall see me so obstinate in my resolution against all exhortations and menaces that shall be given me, when my infirmity shall press hardest upon me, may not think 'tis mere obstinacy in me; or any one so ill-natured as to judge it to be any motive of glory: for it would be a strange ambition to seek to gain honour by an action my gardener or my groom can perform as well as I. Certainly, I have not a heart so tumorous and windy, that I should exchange so solid a pleasure as health for an airy and imaginary pleasure: glory, even that of the Four Sons of Aymon,¹ is too dear bought by a man of my humour, if it cost him three swinging fits of the

¹ A romance, of which there were several editions in French.

stone. Give me health, in God's name! Such as love physic, may also have good, great, and convincing considerations; I do not hate opinions contrary to my own: I am so far from being angry to see a discrepancy betwixt mine and other men's judgments, and from rendering myself unfit for the society of men, from being of another sense and party than mine, that on the contrary (the most general way that nature has followed being variety, and more in souls than bodies, forasmuch as they are of a more supple substance, and more susceptible of forms) I find it much more rare to see our humours and designs jump and agree. And there never were, in the world, two opinions alike, no more than two hairs, or two grains: their most universal quality is diversity.

END OF BOOK THE SECOND

ESSAYS OF MONTAIGNE

BOOK THE THIRD

ESSAYS OF MONTAIGNE

BOOK THE THIRD

CHAPTER I

OF UTILITY AND HONESTY

No man is free from speaking foolish things ; but the worst on't is, when a man labours to play the fool :—

“ *Ne ista bercle magno jam conatu magnas nugas dixerit.*”¹

This does not concern me, mine slip from me with as little care as they are of little value, and 'tis the better for them. I would presently part with them for what they are worth, and neither buy nor sell them, but as they weigh. I speak on paper, as I do to the first person I meet ; and that this is true, observe what follows.

To whom ought not treachery to be hateful, when Tiberius refused it in a thing of so great importance to him ? He had word sent him from Germany that if he thought fit, they would rid him of Arminius by poison² : this was the most potent enemy the Romans had, who had defeated them so ignominiously under Varus, and who alone prevented their aggrandisement in those parts.

¹ “ Nay she, by Hercules ! with a great effort will shortly say a mighty triffe.”—Terence, *Heaut.*, act iii., s. 4.

² Tacitus, *Annal.*, ii. 88.

He returned answer, "that the people of Rome were wont to revenge themselves of their enemies by open ways, and with their swords in their hands, and not clandestinely and by fraud": he quitted the profitable for the honest. You will tell me that he was a braggadocio; I believe it: and 'tis no great miracle in men of his profession. But the acknowledgment of virtue is not less valid in the mouth of him who hates it, forasmuch as truth forces it from him, and if he will not inwardly receive it, he at least puts it on for a decoration.

Our outward and inward structure is full of imperfection; but there is nothing useless in nature, not even inutility itself; nothing has insinuated itself into this universe that has not therein some fit and proper place. Our being is cemented with sickly qualities: ambition, jealousy, envy, revenge, superstition, and despair have so natural a possession in us, that its image is discerned in beasts; nay, and cruelty, so unnatural a vice; for even in the midst of compassion we feel within, I know not what tart-sweet titillation of ill-natured pleasure in seeing others suffer, and the children feel it.—

"*Suave mari magno, turbantibus æquora ventus,
E terrâ magnum alterius spectare laborem*"¹

of the seeds of which qualities, whoever should divest man, would destroy the fundamental conditions of human life. Likewise, in all governments there are necessary offices, not only abject, but vicious also. Vices there help to make up the seam in our piecing, as poisons are useful for the conservation of health. If they become excusable because they are of use to us, and that the common necessity

¹ "It is sweet, when the winds disturb the waters of the vast sea, to witness from land the peril of other persons"—Lucretius, II. 1.

covers their true qualities, we are to resign this part to the strongest and boldest citizens, who sacrifice their honour and conscience, as others of old sacrificed their lives, for the good of their country : we, who are weaker, take upon us parts both that are more easy and less hazardous. The public weal requires that men should betray, and lie, and massacre ; let us leave this commission to men who are more obedient and more supple.

In earnest, I have often been troubled to see judges, by fraud and false hopes of favour or pardon, allure a criminal to confess his fact, and therein to make use of cozenage and impudence. It would become justice, and Plato himself, who countenances this manner of proceeding, to furnish me with other means more suitable to my own liking : this is a malicious kind of justice ; and I look upon it as no less wounded by itself than by others. I said not long since to some company in discourse, that I should hardly be drawn to betray my prince for a particular man, who should be much ashamed to betray any particular man for my prince ; and I do not only hate deceiving myself, but that any one should deceive through me ; I will neither afford matter nor occasion to any such thing.

In the little I have had to mediate betwixt our princes¹ in the divisions and subdivisions by which we are at this time torn to pieces, I have been very careful that they should neither be deceived in me nor deceive others by me. People of that kind of trading are very reserved, and pretend to be the most moderate imaginable and nearest to the opinions of those with whom they have to do ; I expose myself in my stiff opinion, and after a

¹ Between the King of Navarre, afterwards Henry IV, and the Duc de Guise See *De Thou, De Vtde Sud*, iii 9.

method the most my own; a tender negotiator, a novice, who had rather fail in the affair than be wanting to myself. And yet it has been hitherto with so good luck (for fortune has doubtless the best share in it), that few things have passed from hand to hand with less suspicion or more favour and privacy. I have a free and open way that easily insinuates itself and obtains belief with those with whom I am to deal at the first meeting. Sincerity and pure truth, in what age soever, pass for current; and besides, the liberty and freedom of a man who treats without any interest of his own is never hateful or suspected, and he may very well make use of the answer of Hyperides to the Athenians, who complained of his blunt way of speaking: "Messieurs, do not consider whether or no I am free, but whether I am so without a bribe, or without any advantage to my own affairs."¹ My liberty of speaking has also easily cleared me from all suspicion of dissembling by its vehemency, leaving nothing unsaid, how home and bitter soever (so that I could have said no worse behind their backs), and in that it carried along with it a manifest show of simplicity and indifference. I pretend to no other fruit by acting than to act, and add to it no long arguments or propositions; every action plays its own game, win if it can.

As to the rest, I am not swayed by any passion, either of love or hatred, towards the great, nor has my will captivated either by particular injury or obligation. I look upon our kings with an affection simply loyal and respectful, neither prompted nor restrained by any private interest, and I love myself for it. Nor does the general and just cause attract me otherwise than with moderation, and without heat. I am not subject to those penetrating and

¹ Plutarch, *On the Difference between a Flatterer and a Friend*, c. 21.

close compacts and engagements. Anger and hatred are beyond the duty of justice ; and are passions only useful to those who do not keep themselves strictly to their duty by simple reason :—

“ Utatur motu animi, qui uti ratione non potest.”¹

All legitimate intentions are temperate and equable of themselves ; if otherwise, they degenerate into seditious and unlawful. This is it which makes me walk everywhere with my head erect, my face and my heart open. In truth, and I am not afraid to confess it, I should easily, in case of need, hold up one candle to St. Michael and another to his dragon, like the old woman ; I will follow the right side even to the fire, but exclusively, if I can. Let Montaigne be overwhelmed in the public ruin if need be ; but if there be no need, I should think myself obliged to fortune to save me, and I will make use of all the length of line my duty allows for his preservation. Was it not Atticus² who, being of the just but losing side, preserved himself by his moderation in that universal shipwreck of the world, amongst so many mutations and diversities ? For private man, as he was, it is more easy ; and in such kind of work, I think a man may justly not be ambitious to offer and insinuate himself. For a man, indeed, to be wavering and irresolute, to keep his affection unmoved and without inclination in the troubles of his country and public divisions, I neither think it handsome nor honest :—

“ Ea non media, sed nulla via est, velut eventum exspectantium, quo fortunae consilia sua applicent.”³

¹ “ He may employ his passion, who can make no use of his reason.”—Cicero, *Tusc. Quæs.*, iv. 25

² Cornelius Nepos, in *Vita*, c 6.

³ “ That is not a middle way, but no way, to await events, by which they refer their resolutions to fortune.”—Livy, xxxii 21.

This may be allowed in our neighbours' affairs ; and thus Gelo, the tyrant of Syracuse,¹ suspended his inclination in the war betwixt the Greeks and barbarians, keeping a resident ambassador with presents at Delphos, to watch and see which way fortune would incline, and then take fit occasion to fall in with the victors. It would be a kind of treason to proceed after this manner in our own domestic affairs, wherein a man must of necessity be of the one side or the other ; though for a man who has no office or express command to call him out, to sit still I hold it more excusable (and yet I do not excuse myself upon these terms) than in foreign expeditions, to which, however, according to our laws, no man is pressed against his will. And yet even those who wholly engage themselves in such a war may behave themselves with such temper and moderation, that the storm may fly over their heads without doing them any harm. Had we not reason to hope such an issue in the person of the late Bishop of Orleans, the Sieur de Morvilliers²? And I know, amongst those who behave themselves most bravely in the present war, some whose manners are so gentle, obliging, and just, that they will certainly stand firm, whatever event Heaven is preparing for us. I am of opinion that it properly belongs to kings only to quarrel with kings ; and I laugh at those spirits who, out of lightness of heart, lend themselves to so disproportioned disputes ; for a man has never the more particular quarrel with a prince, by marching openly and boldly against him for his own honour and according to his duty ; if he does not love such a

¹ Herodotus, vii. 163.

² An able negotiator, who, though protected by the Guises, and strongly supporting them, was yet very far from persecuting the Reformists. He died 1577

person, he does better, he esteems him. And notably the cause of the laws and of the ancient government of a kingdom, has this always annexed to it, that even those who, for their own private interest, invade them, excuse, if they do not honour, the defenders.

But we are not, as we nowadays do, to call peevishness and inward discontent, that spring from private interest and passion, duty, nor a treacherous and malicious conduct, courage; they call their proneness to mischief and violence zeal; 'tis not the cause, but their interest, that inflames them; they kindle and begin a war, not because it is just, but because it is war.

A man may very well behave himself commodiously and loyally too amongst those of the adverse party; carry yourself, if not with the same equal affection (for that is capable of different measure), at least with an affection moderate, well tempered, and such as shall not so engage you to one party, that it may demand all you are able to do for that side, content yourself with a moderate proportion of their favour and goodwill; and to swim in troubled waters without fishing in them.

The other way, of offering a man's self and the utmost service he is able to do, both to one party and the other, has still less of prudence in it than conscience. Does not he to whom you betray another, to whom you were as welcome as to himself, know that you will at another time do as much for him? He holds you for a villain; and in the meantime hears what you will say, gathers intelligence from you, and works his own ends out of your disloyalty; double-dealing men are useful for bringing in, but we must have a care they carry out as little as is possible.

I say nothing to one party that I may not, upon occasion, say to the other, with a little alteration of accent; and report nothing but things either indifferent or known, or what is of common consequence. I cannot permit myself, for any consideration, to tell them a lie. What is intrusted to my secrecy, I religiously conceal; but I take as few trusts of that nature upon me as I can. The secrets of princes are a troublesome burthen to such as are not interested in them. I very willingly bargain that they trust me with little, but confidently rely upon what I tell them. I have ever known more than I desired. One open way of speaking introduces another open way of speaking, and draws out discoveries, like wine and love. Philippides, in my opinion, answered King Lysimachus very discreetly, who, asking him what of his estate he should bestow upon him? "What you will," said he, "provided it be none of your secrets."¹ I see every one is displeased if the bottom of the affair be concealed from him wherein he is employed, or that there be any reservation in the thing; for my part, I am content to know no more of the business than what they would have me employ myself in, nor desire that my knowledge should exceed or restrict what I have to say. If I must serve for an instrument of deceit, let it be at least with a safe conscience: I will not be reputed a servant either so affectionate or so loyal as to be fit to betray any one he who is unfaithful to himself, is excusably so to his master. But they are princes who do not accept men by halves, and despise limited and conditional services: I cannot help it: I frankly tell them how far I can go; for a slave I should not be, but to reason, and

¹ Plutarch, *On Curiosity*, c. 4

I can hardly submit even to that. And they also are to blame to exact from a freeman the same subjection and obligation to their service that they do from him they have made and bought, or whose fortune particularly and expressly depends upon theirs. The laws have delivered me from a great anxiety ; they have chosen a side for me, and given me a master ; all other superiority and obligation ought to be relative to that, and cut off from all other. Yet this is not to say, that if my affection should otherwise incline me, my hand should presently obey it ; the will and desire are a law to themselves ; but actions must receive commission from the public appointment.

All this proceeding of mine is a little dissonant from the ordinary forms ; it would produce no great effects, nor be of any long duration ; innocence itself could not, in this age of ours, either negotiate without dissimulation, or traffic without lying ; and, indeed, public employments are by no means for my palate : what my profession requires, I perform after the most private manner that I can. Being young, I was engaged up to the ears in business, and it succeeded well ; but I disengaged myself in good time. I have often since avoided meddling in it, rarely accepted, and never asked it ; keeping my back still turned to ambition ; but if not like rowers who so advance backward, yet so, at the same time, that I am less obliged to my resolution than to my good fortune, that I was not wholly embarked in it. For there are ways less displeasing to my taste, and more suitable to my ability, by which, if she had formerly called me to the public service, and my own advancement towards the world's opinion, I know I should, in spite of all my own arguments to the contrary, have pursued them.

Such as commonly say, in opposition to what I profess, that what I call freedom, simplicity, and plainness in my manners, is art and subtlety, and rather prudence than goodness, industry than nature, good sense than good luck, do me more honour than disgrace: but, certainly, they make my subtlety too subtle; and whoever has followed me close, and pried narrowly into me, I will give him the victory, if he does not confess that there is no rule in their school that could match this natural motion, and maintain an appearance of liberty and licence, so equal and inflexible, through so many various and crooked paths, and that all their wit and endeavour could never have led them through. The way of truth is one and simple; that of particular profit, and the commodity of affairs a man is entrusted with, is double, unequal, and casual. I have often seen these counterfeit and artificial liberties practised, but, for the most part, without success, they relish of Æsop's ass who, in emulation of the dog, obligingly clapped his two fore-feet upon his master's shoulders; but as many caresses as the dog had for such an expression of kindness, twice so many blows with a cudgel had the poor ass for his compliment:—

"*Id maximē quemque decet, quod est cujusque suum maximē*"¹

I will not deprive deceit of its due; that were but ill to understand the world: I know it has often been of great usē, and that it maintains and supplies most men's employment. There are vices that are lawful, as there are many actions, either good or excusable, that are not lawful in themselves.

The justice which in itself is natural and universal

¹ "That best becomes every man which belongs most to him."—Cicero, *De Offic.*, i. 31.

is otherwise and more nobly ordered than that other justice which is special, national, and constrained to the ends of government :—

“*Veri juris germanæque justitiae solidam et expressam effigiem nullam tenemus, umbrâ et imaginibus utimur*”¹;

insomuch that the sage Dandamis,² hearing the lives of Socrates, Pythagoras, and Diogenes read, judged them to be great men every way, excepting that they were too much subjected to the reverence of the laws, which, to second and authorise, true virtue must abate very much of its original vigour ; many vicious actions are introduced, not only by their permission, but by their advice :—

“*Ex senatus consultis plebisques citis scelera exercentur*”³

I follow the common phrase that distinguishes betwixt profitable and honest things, so as to call some natural actions, that are not only profitable but necessary, dishonest and foul.

But let us proceed in our examples of treachery : two pretenders to the kingdom of Thrace⁴ were fallen into dispute about their title ; the emperor hindered them from proceeding to blows : but one of them, under colour of bringing things to a friendly issue by an interview, having invited his competitor to an entertainment in his own house, imprisoned

¹ “We retain no solid and express portraiture of true right and germane justice, we have only the shadow and image of it”—Cicero, *De Offic.*, iii. 17

² An Indian sage who lived in the time of Alexander the Great Plutarch, *Life of Alexander*, sects 8 and 65 Strabo (Book xv) calls him Mandanis.

³ “Crimes are committed by the decrees of the Senate and the popular assembly”—Seneca, *Ep.*, 95.

⁴ Rhæscuporis and Cotys IV. (A.D. 12-19). Tacitus, *Annal.*, ii. 65. Or rather of Thrace. They seem to be known almost exclusively from coins.

and killed him. Justice required that the Romans should have satisfaction for this offence; but there was a difficulty in obtaining it by ordinary ways; what, therefore, they could not do legitimately, without war and without danger, they resolved to do by treachery; and what they could not honestly do, they did profitably. For which end, one Pomponius Flaccus was found to be a fit instrument. This man, by dissembled words and assurances, having drawn the other into his toils, instead of the honour and favour he had promised him, sent him bound hand and foot to Rome. Here one traitor betrayed another, contrary to common custom: for they are full of mistrust, and 'tis hard to overreach them in their own art: witness the sad experience we have lately had.¹

Let who will be Pomponius Flaccus, and there are enough who would: for my part, both my word and my faith are, like all the rest, parts of this common body: their best effect is the public service; this I take for presupposed. But should one command me to take charge of the courts of law and lawsuits, I should make answer, that I understood it not; or the place of a leader of pioneers, I would say, that I was called to a more honourable employment; so likewise, he that would employ me to lie, betray, and forswear myself, though not to assassinate or to poison, for some notable service, I should say, "If I have robbed or stolen anything from any man, send me rather to the galleys." For it is permissible in a man of honour to say, as the Lacedæmonians did,² having been defeated by Antipater, when just upon con-

¹ Montaigne here probably refers to the feigned reconciliation between Catherine de Medici and Henri, Duc de Guise, in 1588.

² Plutarch, *Difference between a Flatterer and a Friend*, c. 21.

cluding an agreement: "You may impose as heavy and ruinous taxes upon us as you please, but to command us to do shameful and dishonest things, you will lose your time, for it is to no purpose." Every one ought to make the same vow to himself that the kings of Egypt made their judges solemnly swear,¹ that they would not do anything contrary to their consciences, though never so much commanded to it by themselves. In such commissions there is evident mark of ignominy and condemnation; and he who gives it at the same time accuses you, and gives it, if you understand it right, for a burden and a punishment. As much as the public affairs are bettered by your exploit, so much are your own the worse, and the better you behave yourself in it, 'tis so much the worse for yourself; and it will be no new thing, nor, peradventure, without some colour of justice, if the same person ruin you who set you on work.

If treachery can be in any case excusable, it must be only so when it is practised to chastise and betray treachery. There are examples enough of treacheries, not only rejected, but chastised and punished by those in favour of whom they were undertaken. Who is ignorant of Fabricius' sentence against the physician of Pyrrhus?

But this we also find recorded, that some persons have commanded a thing, who afterward have severely avenged the execution of it upon him they had employed, rejecting the reputation of so unbridled an authority, and disowning so abandoned and base a servitude and obedience. Jaropalk, Duke of Russia,² tampered with a gentleman of Hungary to betray Boleslas, king of Poland, either

¹ Plutarch, *Apothegms of the Kings*.

² Martin Cromer, *De Rebus Polon.*, liv v, p. 131, ed 1555

by killing him, or by giving the Russians opportunity to do him some notable mischief. This worthy went ably to work: he was more assiduous than before in the service of that king, so that he obtained the honour to be of his council, and one of the chiefest in his trust. With these advantages, and taking an opportune occasion of his master's absence, he betrayed Vislicza, a great and rich city, to the Russians, which was entirely sacked and burned, and not only all the inhabitants of both sexes, young and old, put to the sword, but moreover a great number of neighbouring gentry, whom he had drawn thither to that end. Jaropalk, his revenge being thus satisfied and his anger appeased, which was not, indeed, without pretence (for Boleslas had highly offended him, and after the same manner), and sated with the fruit of this treachery, coming to consider the fulness of it, with a sound judgment and clear from passion, looked upon what had been done with so much horror and remorse that he caused the eyes to be bored out and the tongue and shameful parts to be cut off of him who had performed it.

Antigonus¹ persuaded the Argyraspides² to betray Eumenes, their general, his adversary, into his hands; but after he had caused him, so delivered, to be slain, he would himself be the commissioner of the divine justice for the punishment of so detestable a crime, and committed them into the hands of the governor of the province, with express command, by whatever means, to destroy and bring them all to an evil end, so that of that great number of men, not so much as one ever returned again into

¹ Plutarch, *Life of Eumenes*, c 9

² A picked body of troops in the Macedonian army, carrying silver-plated shields.

Macedonia: the better he had been served, the more wickedly he judged it to be, and meriting greater punishment.

The slave who betrayed the place where his master, P. Sulpicius, lay concealed, was, according to the promise of Sylla's proscription, manumitted for his pains; but according to the promise of the public justice, which was free from any such engagement, he was thrown headlong from the Tarpeian rock.¹

Our King Clovis, instead of the arms of gold he had promised them, caused three of Cararie's² servants to be hanged after they had betrayed their master to him, though he had debauched them to it: he hanged them with the purse of their reward about their necks; after having satisfied his second and special faith, he satisfied the general and first.

Mohammed II. having resolved to rid himself of his brother, out of jealousy of state, according to the practice of the Ottoman family, he employed one of his officers in the execution, who, pouring a quantity of water too fast into him, choked him. This being done, to expiate the murder, he delivered the murderer into the hands of the mother of him he had so caused to be put to death, for they were only brothers by the father's side; she, in his presence, ripped up the murderer's bosom, and with her own hands rifled his breast for his heart, tore it out, and threw it to the dogs. And even to the worst people it is the sweetest thing imaginable, having once gained their end by a vicious action, to foist, in all security, into it some show of virtue and justice, as by way of compensation and conscientious correction; to which may be added, that

¹ Valerius Maximus, vi. 5, 7.

² Gregory of Tours, ii. 41.

they look upon the ministers of such horrid crimes as upon men who reproach them with them, and think by their deaths to erase the memory and testimony of such proceedings.

Or if, perhaps, you are rewarded, not to frustrate the public necessity for that extreme and desperate remedy, he who does it cannot for all that, if he be not such himself, but look upon you as an accursed and execrable fellow, and conclude you a greater traitor than he does, against whom you are so: for he tries the malignity of your disposition by your own hands, where he cannot possibly be deceived, you having no object of preceding hatred to move you to such an act; but he employs you as they do condemned malefactors in executions of justice, an office as necessary as dishonourable. Besides the baseness of such commissions, there is, moreover, a prostitution of conscience. Seeing that the daughter of Sejanus could not be put to death by the law of Rome, because she was a virgin,¹ she was, to make it lawful, first ravished by the hangman and then strangled: not only his hand but his soul is slave to the public convenience.

When Amurath I., more grievously to punish his subjects who had taken part in the parricide rebellion of his son, ordained that their nearest kindred should assist in the execution, I find it very handsome in some of them to have rather chosen to be unjustly thought guilty of the parricide of another than to serve justice by a parricide of their own. And where I have seen, at the taking of some little fort by assault in my time, some rascals who, to save their own lives, would consent to hang their friends and companions, I have looked upon them to be of worse condition than those who were

¹ Tacitus, *Annal*, v. 9

hanged. 'Tis said¹ that Witold, Prince of Lithuania, introduced into the nation the practice that the criminal condemned to death should with his own hand execute the sentence, thinking it strange that a third person, innocent of the fault, should be made guilty of homicide.

A prince, when by some urgent circumstance or some impetuous and unforeseen accident that very much concerns his state, compelled to forfeit his word and break his faith, or otherwise forced from his ordinary duty, ought to attribute this necessity to a lash of the divine rod: vice it is not, for he has given up his own reason to a more universal and more powerful reason; but certainly 'tis a misfortune: so that if any one should ask me what remedy? "None," say I, "if he were really racked between these two extremes: *sed videat, ne queratur latebra perjurio*,² he must do it: but if he did it without regret, if it did not weigh on him to do it, 'tis a sign his conscience is in a sorry condition." If there be a person to be found of so tender a conscience as to think no cure whatever worth so important a remedy, I shall like him never the worse, he could not more excusably or more decently perish. We cannot do all we would, so that we must often, as the last anchorage, commit the protection of our vessels to the simple conduct of heaven. To what more just necessity does he reserve himself? What is less possible for him to do than what he cannot do but at the expense of his faith and honour, things that, perhaps, ought to be dearer to him than his own safety, or even the safety of his people. Though he should, with folded arms, only call God to his assistance, has he

¹ Cromer, *De Rebus Polon.*, lib. xvi.

² Cicero, *De Offic.*, iii. 29.

not reason to hope that the divine goodness will not refuse the favour of an extraordinary arm to just and pure hands? These are dangerous examples, rare and sickly exceptions to our natural rules: we must yield to them, but with great moderation and circumspection: no private utility is of such importance that we should upon that account strain our consciences to such a degree: the public may be, when very manifest and of very great concern.

Timoleon made a timely expiation for his strange exploit by the tears he shed, calling to mind that it was with a fraternal hand that he had slain the tyrant; and it justly pricked his conscience that he had been necessitated to purchase the public utility at so great a price as the violation of his private morality. Even the Senate itself, by his means delivered from slavery, durst not positively determine of so high a fact, and divided into two so important and contrary aspects; but the Syracusans,¹ sending at the same time to the Corinthians to solicit their protection, and to require of them a captain fit to re-establish their city in its former dignity and to clear Sicily of several little tyrants by whom it was oppressed, they deputed Timoleon for that service, with this cunning declaration: "that according as he should behave himself well or ill in his employment, their sentence should incline either to favour the deliverer of his country, or to disfavour the murderer of his brother." This fantastic conclusion carries along with it some excuse, by reason of the danger of the example, and the importance of so strange an action: and they did well to discharge their own judgment of it, and to refer it to others who were not so much concerned. But

¹ Plutarch (*Life of Timoleon*, c. 3) says twenty years after

Timoleon's comportment in this expedition soon made his cause more clear, so worthily and virtuously he demeaned himself upon all occasions ; and the good fortune that accompanied him in the difficulties he had to overcome in this noble employment, seemed to be strewed in his way by the gods, favourably conspiring for his justification.

The end of this matter is excusable, if any can be so ; but the profit of the augmentation of the public revenue, that served the Roman Senate for a pretence to the foul conclusion I am going to relate, is not sufficient to warrant any such injustice.

Certain cities had redeemed themselves and their liberty by money, by the order and consent of the Senate, out of the hands of L. Sylla : the business coming again in question, the Senate condemned them to be taxable as they were before, and that the money they had disbursed for their redemption should be lost to them.¹ Civil war often produces such villainous examples ; that we punish private men for confiding in us when we were public ministers : and the self-same magistrate makes another man pay the penalty of his change that has nothing to do with it ; the pedagogue whips his scholar for his docility ; and the guide beats the blind man whom he leads by the hand ; a horrid image of justice.

There are rules in philosophy that are both false and weak. The example that is proposed to us for preferring private utility before faith given, has not weight enough by the circumstances they put to it ; robbers have seized you, and after having made you swear to pay them a certain sum of money, dismiss you. 'Tis not well done to say, that an honest man can be quit of his oath without

payment, being out of their hands. 'Tis no such thing: what fear has once made me willing to do, I am obliged to do it when I am no longer in fear; and though that fear only prevailed with my tongue without forcing my will, yet am I bound to keep my word. For my part, when my tongue has sometimes inconsiderately said something that I did not think, I have made a conscience of disowning it: otherwise, by degrees, we shall abolish all the right another derives from our promises and oaths:—

“Quasi verò fortī viro vis possit adhiberi.”¹

And 'tis only lawful, upon the account of private interest, to excuse breach of promise, when we have promised something that is unlawful and wicked in itself; for the right of virtue ought to take place of the right of any obligation of ours.

I have formerly² placed Epaminondas in the first rank of excellent men, and do not repent it. How high did he stretch the consideration of his own particular duty? he who never killed a man whom he had overcome; who, for the inestimable benefit of restoring the liberty of his country, made conscience of killing a tyrant or his accomplices without due form of justice³: and who concluded him to be a wicked man, how good a citizen soever otherwise, who amongst his enemies in battle spared not his friend and his guest. This was a soul of a rich composition: he married goodness and humanity, nay, even the tenderest and most delicate in the whole school of philosophy, to the roughest and most violent human actions. Was

¹ “As though a man of true courage could be compelled.”—Cicero, *De Offic.*, iii. 30

² Book II., c. 36

³ Plutarch, *On the Demon of Socrates*, c. 4 and 24.

it nature or art that had intenerated that great courage of his, so full, so obstinate against pain and death and poverty, to such an extreme degree of sweetness and compassion? Dreadful in arms and blood, he overran and subdued a nation invincible by all others but by him alone, and yet in the heat of an encounter, could turn aside from his friend and guest.¹ Certainly he was fit to command in war who could so rein himself with the curb of good nature, in the height and heat of his fury, a fury inflamed and foaming with blood and slaughter. 'Tis a miracle to be able to mix any image of justice with such violent actions: and it was only possible for such a steadfastness of mind as that of Epaminondas therein to mix sweetness and the facility of the gentlest manners and purest innocence. And whereas one² told the Mamertini that statutes were of no efficacy against armed men; and another³ told the tribune of the people that the time of justice and of war were distinct things, and a third said⁴ that the noise of arms deafened the voice of laws, this man was not precluded from listening to the laws of civility and pure courtesy. Had he not borrowed from his enemies⁵ the custom of sacrificing to the Muses when he went to war, that they might by their sweetness and gaiety soften his martial and rigorous fury? Let us not fear, by the example of so great a master, to believe that there is something unlawful, even against an enemy, and that the common concern ought not to require all things of all men, against private interest:—

¹ Plutarch, *On the Demon of Socrates*, c. 17

² Plutarch *Life of Pompey*, c. 3.

³ Idem, *Life of Cæsar*, c. 11.

⁴ Idem, *Life of Marius*, c. 10.

⁵ The Lacedæmonians

“ Manente memoriā, etiam in dissidio publicorum fœderum, privati juris ”¹ :—

“ Et nulla potentia vires
Præstandi, ne quid peccet amicus, habet ”²,

and that all things are not lawful to an honest man for the service of his prince, the laws, or the general quarrel :—

“ Non enim patria prestat omnibus officis . . . et ipsi conducti pios habere cives in parentes ? ”³

‘Tis an instruction proper for the time wherein we live: we need not harden our courage with these arms of steel; ‘tis enough that our shoulders are inured to them: ‘tis enough to dip our pens in ink without dipping them in blood. If it be grandeur of courage, and the effect of a rare and singular virtue, to contemn friendship, private obligations, a man’s word and relationship, for the common good and obedience to the magistrate, ‘tis certainly sufficient to excuse us, that ‘tis a grandeur that can have no place in the grandeur of Epaminondas’ courage.

I abominate those mad exhortations of this other discomposed soul,⁴

“ Dum tela micant, non vos pietatis imago
Ulla, nec adversa conspecti fronte parentes
Commoveant, vultus gladio turbate verendos.”⁵

¹ “ The memory of private right remaining even amid public dissensions ”—Livy, xxv 18

² “ No power can stand in the way of a friend to prevent him from doing wrong ”—Ovid, *De Ponto*, i. 7, 37

³ “ For does not the duty to one’s country precede all others? . . . The country itself requires that its citizens should act piously toward their parents ”—Cicero, *De Offic*, iii 23

⁴ Julius Cæsar

⁵ “ While swords glitter, let no idea of piety, nor the face even of a father presented to you, move you to mutilate with your sword those venerable features ”—Lucan, vii 320

Let us deprive wicked, bloody, and treacherous natures of such a pretence of reason: let us set aside this guilty and extravagant justice, and stick to more human imitations. How great things can time and example do! In an encounter of the civil war against Cinna, one of Pompey's soldiers having unawares killed his brother, who was of the contrary party, he immediately for shame and sorrow killed himself¹: and some years after, in another civil war of the same people, a soldier demanded a reward of his officer for having killed his brother.²

A man but ill proves the honour and beauty of an action by its utility: and very erroneously concludes that every one is obliged to it, and that it becomes every one to do it, if it be of utility:—

“*Omnia non pariter rerum sunt omnibus apta.*”³

Let us take that which is most necessary and profitable for human society, it will be marriage: and yet the council or the saints find the contrary much better, excluding from it the most venerable vocation of man: as we design those horses for stallions of which we have the least esteem.

CHAPTER II OF REPENTANCE

OTHERS form man; I only report him: and represent a particular one, ill fashioned enough, and whom, if I had to model him anew, I should certainly make something else than what he is:

¹ Tacitus, *Hist.*, iii. 51

² *Idem, ibid*
³ “All things are not equally fit for all men”—Propertius, iii. 9, 7

but that's past recalling. Now, though the features of my picture alter and change, 'tis not, however, unlike; the world eternally turns round; all things therein are incessantly moving, the earth, the rocks of Caucasus, and the pyramids of Egypt, both by the public motion and their own. Even constancy itself is no other but a slower and more languishing motion. I cannot fix my object; 'tis always tottering and reeling by a natural giddiness; I take it as it is at the instant I consider it; I do not paint its being, I paint its passage; not a passing from one age to another, or, as the people say, from seven to seven years, but from day to day, from minute to minute, I must accommodate my history to the hour: I may presently change, not only by fortune, but also by intention. 'Tis a counterpart of various and changeable accidents, and of irresolute imaginations, and, as it falls out, sometimes contrary: whether it be that I am then another self, or that I take subjects by other circumstances and considerations: so it is that I may peradventure contradict myself, but, as Demades said, I never contradict the truth. Could my soul once take footing, I would not essay but resolve: but it is always learning and making trial.

I propose a life ordinary and without lustre: 'tis all one; all moral philosophy may as well be applied to a common and private life, as to one of richer composition: every man carries the entire form of human condition. Authors communicate themselves to the people by some especial and extrinsic mark; I, the first of any, by my universal being; as Michel de Montaigne, not as a grammarian, a poet, or a lawyer. If the world find fault that I speak too much of myself, I find fault that they do not so much as think of themselves. But is it

reason that, being so particular in my way of living, I should pretend to recommend myself to the public knowledge? And is it also reason that I should produce to the world, where art and handling have so much credit and authority, crude and simple effects of nature, and of a weak nature to boot? Is it not to build a wall without stone or brick, or some such thing, to write books without learning and without art? The fancies of music are carried on by art; mine by chance. I have this, at least, according to discipline, that never any man treated of a subject he better understood and knew than I what I have undertaken, and that in this I am the most understanding man alive: secondly, that never any man penetrated farther into his matter, nor better and more distinctly sifted the parts and sequences of it, nor ever more exactly and fully arrived at the end he proposed to himself. To perfect it, I need bring nothing but fidelity to the work; and that is there, and the most pure and sincere that is anywhere to be found. I speak truth, not so much as I would, but as much as I dare; and I dare a little the more, as I grow older; for, methinks, custom allows to age more liberty of prating, and more indiscretion of talking of a man's self. That cannot fall out here, which I often see elsewhere, that the work and the artificer contradict one another: "Can a man of such sober conversation have written so foolish a book?" Or "Do so learned writings proceed from a man of so weak conversation?" He who talks at a very ordinary rate, and writes rare matter, 'tis to say that his capacity is borrowed and not his own. A learned man is not learned in all things: but a sufficient man is sufficient throughout, even to ignorance itself; here my book and I go hand in hand

together. Elsewhere men may commend or censure the work, without reference to the workman ; here they cannot : who touches the one, touches the other. He who shall judge of it without knowing him, will more wrong himself than me ; he who does know him, gives me all the satisfaction I desire. I shall be happy beyond my desert, if I can obtain only thus much from the public approbation, as to make men of understanding perceive that I was capable of profiting by knowledge, had I had it ; and that I deserved to have been assisted by a better memory.

Be pleased here to excuse what I often repeat, that I very rarely repent, and that my conscience is satisfied with itself, not as the conscience of an angel, or that of a horse, but as the conscience of a man ; always adding this clause, not one of ceremony, but a true and real submission, that I speak inquiring and doubting, purely and simply referring myself to the common and accepted beliefs for the resolution. I do not teach, I only relate.

There is no vice that is absolutely a vice which does not offend, and that a sound judgment does not accuse ; for there is in it so manifest a deformity and inconvenience, that peradventure they are in the right who say that it is chiefly begotten by stupidity and ignorance : so hard is it to imagine that a man can know without abhorring it. Malice sucks up the greatest part of its own venom, and poisons itself.¹ Vice leaves repentance in the soul, like an ulcer in the flesh, which is always scratching and lacerating itself : for reason effaces all other grief and sorrows, but it begets that of repentance, which is so much the more grievous, by reason it springs within, as the cold and heat of fevers are

¹ Seneca, *Ep.*, 81

more sharp than those that only strike upon the outward skin. I hold for vices (but every one according to its proportion), not only those which reason and nature condemn, but those also which the opinion of men, though false and erroneous, have made such, if authorised by law and custom.

There is likewise no virtue which does not rejoice a well-descended nature : there is a kind of, I know not what, congratulation in well-doing that gives us an inward satisfaction, and a generous boldness that accompanies a good conscience : a soul daringly vicious may, peradventure, arm itself with security, but it cannot supply itself with this complacency and satisfaction. 'Tis no little satisfaction to feel a man's self preserved from the contagion of so depraved an age, and to say to himself : "Whoever could penetrate into my soul would not there find me guilty either of the affliction or ruin of any one, or of revenge or envy, or any offence against the public laws, or of innovation or disturbance, or failure of my word ; and though the licence of the time permits and teaches every one so to do, yet have I not plundered any Frenchman's goods, or taken his money, and have lived upon what is my own, in war as well as in peace ; neither have I set any man to work without paying him his hire." These testimonies of a good conscience please, and this natural rejoicing is very beneficial to us, and the only reward that we can never fail of.

To ground the recompence of virtuous actions upon the approbation of others is too uncertain and unsafe a foundation, especially in so corrupt and ignorant an age as this, wherein the good opinion of the vulgar is injurious : upon whom do you rely to show you what is recommendable ? God defend me from being an honest man, according to the

descriptions of honour I daily see every one make of himself:—

“Quæ fuerant vitia, mores sunt.”¹

Some of my friends have at times schooled and scolded me with great sincerity and plainness, either of their own voluntary motion, or by me entreated to it as to an office, which to a well-composed soul surpasses not only in utility, but in kindness, all other offices of friendship: I have always received them with the most open arms, both of courtesy and acknowledgment; but to say the truth, I have often found so much false measure, both in their reproaches and praises, that I had not done much amiss, rather to have done ill, than to have done well according to their notions. We, who live private lives, not exposed to any other view than our own, ought chiefly to have settled a pattern within ourselves by which to try our actions: and according to that, sometimes to encourage and sometimes to correct ourselves. I have my laws and my judicature to judge of myself, and apply myself more to these than to any other rules: I do, indeed, restrain my actions according to others, but extend them not by any other rule than my own. You yourself only know if you are cowardly and cruel, loyal and devout: others see you not, and only guess at you by uncertain conjectures, and do not so much see your nature as your art; rely not therefore upon their opinions, but stick to your own:—

“Tuo tibi judicio est utendum. . . . Virtutis et vitorum grave
ipsius conscientiae pondus est · quā sublatā, jacent omnia ”²

¹ “What before had been vices are now manners”—Seneca, *Ep.*, 39

² “Thou must employ thy own judgment upon thyself, great is the weight of thy own conscience in the discovery of virtues and vices which taken away, all things are lost”—Cicero, *De Nat. Deorum*, iii. 35, *Tusc. Quæs.*, i. 25

But the saying that repentance immediately follows the sin seems not to have respect to sin in its high estate, which is lodged in us as in its own proper habitation. One may disown and retract the vices that surprise us, and to which we are hurried by passions; but those which by a long habit are rooted in a strong and vigorous will are not subject to contradiction. Repentance is no other but a recanting of the will and an opposition to our fancies, which lead us which way they please. It makes this person disown his former virtue and contumacy:—

“Quæ mens est hodie, cur eadem non puero fuit?
Vel cur his animis incolumes non redeunt genæ?”¹

’Tis an exact life that maintains itself in due order in private. Every one may juggle his part, and represent an honest man upon the stage: but within, and in his own bosom, where all may do as they list, where all is concealed, to be regular,—there’s the point. The next degree is to be so in his house, and in his ordinary actions, for which we are accountable to none, and where there is no study nor artifice. And therefore Bias, setting forth the excellent state of a private family, says: “of which ² the master is the same within, by his own virtue and temper, that he is abroad, for fear of the laws and report of men.” And it was a worthy saying of Julius Drusus,³ to the masons who offered him, for three thousand crowns, to put his house in such a posture that his neighbours

¹ “What my mind is, why was it not the same, when I was a boy? or why do not the cheeks return to these feelings?”—Horace, *Od.*, iv. 10, 7.

² Plutarch, *Banquet of the Seven Sages*

³ He is called so by Plutarch in his *Instructions to those who Manage State Affairs*; but he was, in reality, Marcus Livius Drusus, the famous tribune, as we find in *Paterculus*

should no longer have the same inspection into it as before ; "I will give you," said he, "six thousand to make it so that everybody may see into every room." 'Tis honourably recorded of Agesilaus,¹ that he used in his journeys always to take up his lodgings in temples, to the end that the people and the gods themselves might pry into his most private actions. Such a one has been a miracle to the world, in whom neither his wife nor servant has ever seen anything so much as remarkable ; few men have been admired by their own domestics ; no one was ever a prophet, not merely in his own house, but in his own country, says the experience of histories² : 'tis the same in things of nought, and in this low example the image of a greater is to be seen. In my country of Gascony, they look upon it as a drollery to see me in print ; the further off I am read from my own home, the better I am esteemed. I purchase printers in Guienne ; elsewhere they purchase me. Upon this it is that they lay their foundation who conceal themselves present and living, to obtain a name when they are dead and absent. I had rather have a great deal less in hand, and do not expose myself to the world upon any other account than my present share ; when I leave it I quit the rest. See this functionary whom the people escort in state, with wonder and applause, to his very door ; he puts off the pageant with his robe, and falls so much the lower by how much he was higher exalted : in himself within, all is tumult and degraded. And though all should be regular there, it will require a vivid and well-chosen judgment to perceive it in these low and

¹ Plutarch, *in Vida*, c 5

² No man is a hero to his valet-de-chambre, said Marshal Catinat.

private actions, to which may be added, that order is a dull, sombre virtue. To enter a breach, conduct an embassy, govern a people, are actions of renown; to reprehend, laugh, sell, pay, love, hate, and gently and justly converse with a man's own family and with himself; not to relax, not to give a man's self the lie, is more rare and hard, and less remarkable. By which means, retired lives, whatever is said to the contrary, undergo duties of as great or greater difficulty than the others do; and private men, says Aristotle,¹ serve virtue more painfully and highly than those in authority do: we prepare ourselves for eminent occasions, more out of glory than conscience. The shortest way to arrive at glory, would be to do that for conscience which we do for glory. and the virtue of Alexander appears to me of much less vigour in his great theatre, than that of Socrates in his mean and obscure employment. I can easily conceive Socrates in the place of Alexander, but Alexander in that of Socrates, I cannot. Who shall ask the one what he can do, he will answer, "Subdue the world": and who shall put the same question to the other, he will say, "Carry on human life conformably with its natural condition"²; a much more general, weighty, and legitimate science than the other.

The virtue of the soul does not consist in flying high, but in walking orderly; its grandeur does not exercise itself in grandeur, but in mediocrity. As they who judge and try us within, make no great account of the lustre of our public actions,

¹ *Nichom. Ethics*, x. 7

² Montaigne added here, "To do for the world that for which he came into the world," but he afterwards erased these words from the manuscript.—Naigeon

and see they are only streaks and rays of clear water springing from a slimy and muddy bottom: so, likewise, they who judge of us by this gallant outward appearance, in like manner conclude of our internal constitution; and cannot couple common faculties, and like their own, with the other faculties that astonish them, and are so far out of their sight. Therefore it is that we give such savage forms to demons: and who does not give Tamerlane great eyebrows, wide nostrils, a dreadful visage, and a prodigious stature, according to the imagination he has conceived by the report of his name? Had any one formerly brought me to Erasmus, I should hardly have believed but that all was adage and apothegm he spoke to his man or his hostess. We much more aptly imagine an artisan upon his close-stool, or upon his wife, than a great president venerable by his port and sufficiency: we fancy that they, from their high tribunals, will not abase themselves so much as to live. As vicious souls are often incited by some foreign impulse to do well, so are virtuous souls to do ill; they are therefore to be judged by their settled state, when they are at home, whenever that may be; and, at all events, when they are nearer repose, and in their native station.

Natural inclinations are much assisted and fortified by education; but they seldom alter and overcome their institution: a thousand natures of my time have escaped towards virtue or vice, through a quite contrary discipline:—

“ Sic ubi, desuetæ silvis, in carcere clausæ
 Mansuevere feræ, et vultus posuere minaces,
 Atque hominem didicere pati, si torrida parvus
 Venit in ora crux, redeunt rabiesque fororque,

Admonitæque tument gustato sanguine fauces.
Fervet, et a trepido vix abstinet ira magistro¹,

these original qualities are not to be rooted out; they may be covered and concealed. The Latin tongue is as it were natural to me; I understand it better than French; but I have not been used to speak it, nor hardly to write it, these forty years. Unless upon extreme and sudden emotions which I have fallen into twice or thrice in my life, and once seeing my father in perfect health fall upon me in a swoon, I have always uttered from the bottom of my heart my first words in Latin; nature deafened, and forcibly expressing itself, in spite of so long a discontinuation; and this example is said of many others.

They who in my time have attempted to correct the manners of the world by new opinions, reform seeming vices; but the essential vices they leave as they were, if indeed they do not augment them, and augmentation is therein to be feared; we defer all other well doing upon the account of these external reformations, of less cost and greater show, and thereby expiate good cheap, for the other natural, consubstantial, and intestine vices. Look a little into our experience: there is no man, if he listen to himself, who does not in himself discover a particular and governing form of his own, that jostles his education, and wrestles with the tempest of passions that are contrary to it. For my part, I seldom find myself agitated with surprises; I always find myself in my place,

¹ "So savage beasts, when shut up in cages and grown unaccustomed to the woods, have become tame, and have laid aside their fierce looks, and submit to the rule of man; if again a slight taste of blood comes into their mouths, their rage and fury return, their jaws are erected by thirst of blood, and their anger scarcely abstains from their trembling master."—Lucan, iv 237.

as heavy and unwieldy bodies do ; if I am not at home, I am always near at hand ; my dissipations do not transport me very far ; there is nothing strange or extreme in the case ; and yet I have sound and vigorous turns.

The true condemnation, and which touches the common practice of men, is that their very retirement itself is full of filth and corruption ; the idea of their reformation composed, their repentance sick and faulty, very nearly as much as their sin. Some, either from having been linked to vice by a natural propension or long practice, cannot see its deformity. Others (of which constitution I am) do indeed feel the weight of vice, but they counter-balance it with pleasure, or some other occasion ; and suffer and lend themselves to it for a certain price, but viciously and basely. Yet there might, haply, be imagined so vast a disproportion of measure, where with justice the pleasure might excuse the sin, as we say of utility ; not only if accidental and out of sin, as in thefts, but in the very exercise of sin, or in the enjoyment of women, where the temptation is violent, and, 'tis said, sometimes not to be overcome.

Being the other day at Armaignac, on the estate of a kinsman of mine, I there saw a peasant who was by every one nicknamed *the thief*. He thus related the story of his life : that, being born a beggar, and finding that he should not be able, so as to be clear of indigence, to get his living by the sweat of his brow, he resolved to turn thief, and by means of his strength of body had exercised this trade all the time of his youth in great security ; for he ever made his harvest and vintage in other men's grounds, but a great way off, and in so great quantities, that it was not to be imagined one man

could have carried away so much in one night upon his shoulders ; and, moreover, he was careful equally to divide and distribute the mischief he did, that the loss was of less importance to every particular man. He is now grown old, and rich for a man of his condition, thanks to his trade, which he openly confesses to every one. And to make his peace with God, he says, that he is daily ready by good offices to make satisfaction to the successors of those he has robbed, and if he do not finish (for to do it all at once he is not able), he will then leave it in charge to his heirs to perform the rest, proportionably to the wrong he himself only knows he has done to each. By this description, true or false, this man looks upon theft as a dishonest action, and hates it, but less than poverty, and simply repents ; but to the extent he has thus recompensed he repents not. This is not that habit which incorporates us into vice, and conforms even our understanding itself to it ; nor is it that impetuous whirlwind that by gusts troubles and blinds our souls, and for the time precipitates us, judgment and all, into the power of vice.

I customarily do what I do thoroughly and make but one step on't ; I have rarely any movement that hides itself and steals away from my reason, and that does not proceed in the matter by the consent of all my faculties, without division or intestine sedition ; my judgment is to have all the blame or all the praise ; and the blame it once has, it has always ; for almost from my infancy it has ever been one : the same inclination, the same turn, the same force ; and as to universal opinions, I fixed myself from my childhood in the place where I resolved to stick. There are some sins that are impetuous, prompt, and sudden ; let us set them

aside : but in these other sins so often repeated, deliberated, and contrived, whether sins of complexion or sins of profession and vocation, I cannot conceive that they should have so long been settled in the same resolution, unless the reason and conscience of him who has them, be constant to have them ; and the repentance he boasts to be inspired with on a sudden, is very hard for me to imagine or form. I follow not the opinion of the Pythagorean sect, "that men take up a new soul when they repair to the images of the gods to receive their oracles," unless he mean that it must needs be extrinsic, new, and lent for the time ; our own showing so little sign of purification and cleanness, fit for such an office.

They act quite contrary to the stoical precepts, who do indeed command us to correct the imperfections and vices we know ourselves guilty of, but forbid us therefore to disturb the repose of our souls : these make us believe that they have great grief and remorse within : but of amendment, correction, or interruption, they make nothing appear. It cannot be a cure if the malady be not wholly discharged ; if repentance were laid upon the scale of the balance, it would weigh down sin. I find no quality so easy to counterfeit as devotion, if men do not conform their manners and life to the profession ; its essence is abstruse and occult , the appearance easy and ostentatious.

For my own part, I may desire in general to be other than I am ; I may condemn and dislike my whole form, and beg of Almighty God for an entire reformation, and that He will please to pardon my natural infirmity : but I ought not to call this repentance, methinks, no more than the being dissatisfied that I am not an angel or Cato. My

actions are regular, and conformable to what I am and to my condition; I can do no better, and repentance does not properly touch things that are not in our power; sorrow does. I imagine an infinite number of natures more elevated and regular than mine; and yet I do not for all that improve my faculties, no more than my arm or will grow more strong and vigorous for conceiving those of another to be so. If to conceive and wish a nobler way of acting than that we have should produce a repentance of our own, we must then repent us of our most innocent actions, forasmuch as we may well suppose that in a more excellent nature they would have been carried on with greater dignity and perfection; and we would that ours were so. When I reflect upon the deportment of my youth, with that of my old age, I find that I have commonly behaved myself with equal order in both, according to what I understand: this is all that my resistance can do. I do not flatter myself, in the same circumstances I should do the same things. It is not a patch, but rather an universal tincture, with which I am stained. I know no repentance, superficial, half-way, and ceremonious; it must sting me all over before I can call it so, and must prick my bowels as deeply and universally as God sees into me.

As to business, many excellent opportunities have escaped me for want of good management; and yet my deliberations were sound enough, according to the occurrences presented to me: 'tis their way to choose always the easiest and safest course. I find that, in my former resolves, I have proceeded with discretion, according to my own rule, and according to the state of the subject proposed, and should do the same a thousand years hence in like

occasions ; I do not consider what it is now, but what it was then, when I deliberated on it : the force of all counsel consists in the time ; occasions and things eternally shift and change. I have in my life committed some important errors, not for want of good understanding, but for want of good luck. There are secret, and not to be foreseen, parts in matters we have in hand, especially in the nature of men ; mute conditions, that make no show, unknown sometimes even to the possessors themselves, that spring and start up by incidental occasions ; if my prudence could not penetrate into nor foresee them, I blame it not : 'tis commissioned no further than its own limits ; if the event be too hard for me, and take the side I have refused, there is no remedy ; I do not blame myself, I accuse my fortune, and not my work ; this cannot be called *repentance*.

Phocion, having given the Athenians an advice that was not followed, and the affair nevertheless succeeding contrary to his opinion, some one said to him, " Well, Phocion, art thou content that matters go so well ? " " I am very well content, " replied he, " that this has happened so well, but I do not repent that I counselled the other. "¹ When any of my friends address themselves to me for advice, I give it candidly and clearly, without sticking, as almost all other men do, at the hazard of the thing's falling out contrary to my opinion, and that I may be reproached for my counsel, I am very indifferent as to that, for the fault will be theirs for having consulted me, and I could not refuse them that office.²

¹ Plutarch, *Apothegmata*.

² We may give advice to others, says *Rochefoucauld*, but we cannot supply them with the wit to profit by it.

I, for my own part, can rarely blame any one but myself for my oversights and misfortunes, for indeed I seldom solicit the advice of another, if not by honour of ceremony, or excepting where I stand in need of information, special science, or as to matter of fact. But in things wherein I stand in need of nothing but judgment, other men's reasons may serve to fortify my own, but have little power to dissuade me; I hear them all with civility and patience; but, to my recollection, I never made use of any but my own. With me, they are but flies and atoms, that confound and distract my will; I lay no great stress upon my opinions; but I lay as little upon those of others, and fortune rewards me accordingly: if I receive but little advice, I also give but little. I am seldom consulted, and still more seldom believed, and know no concern, either public or private, that has been mended or bettered by my advice. Even they whom fortune had in some sort tied to my direction, have more willingly suffered themselves to be governed by any other counsels than mine. And as a man who am as jealous of my repose as of my authority, I am better pleased that it should be so; in leaving me there, they humour what I profess, which is to settle and wholly contain myself within myself. I take a pleasure in being uninterested in other men's affairs, and disengaged from being their warranty, and responsible for what they do.

In all affairs that are past, be it how it will, I have very little regret; for this imagination puts me out of my pain, that they were so to fall out: they are in the great revolution of the world, and in the chain of stoical causes: your fancy cannot, by wish and imagination, move one tittle, but that

the great current of things will not reverse both the past and the future.

As to the rest, I abominate that incidental repentance which old age brings along with it. He, who said of old,¹ that he was obliged to his age for having weaned him from pleasure, was of another opinion than I am; I can never think myself beholden to impotency for any good it can do to me:—

“*Nec tam aversa unquam videbitur ab opere suo providentia, ut debilitas inter optima inventa sit*”²

Our appetites are rare in old age; a profound satiety seizes us after the act; in this I see nothing of conscience; chagrin and weakness imprint in us a drowsy and rheumatic virtue. We must not suffer ourselves to be so wholly carried away by natural alterations as to suffer our judgments to be imposed upon by them. Youth and pleasure have not formerly so far prevailed with me, that I did not well enough discern the face of vice in pleasure; neither does the distaste that years have brought me, so far prevail with me now, that I cannot discern pleasure in vice. Now that I am no more in my flourishing age, I judge as well of these things as if I were.³ I, who narrowly and strictly examine it, find my reason the very same it was in my most licentious age, except, perhaps, that 'tis weaker and more decayed by being grown older; and I find that the pleasure it refuses me upon the account of my bodily health, it would no more refuse now, in considera-

¹ Sophocles; Cicero, *De Senect.*, c. 14.

² “Nor can Providence ever seem so averse to her own work, that debility should be found to be amongst the best things.”—Quintilian, *Instit. Orat.*, v. 12.

³ “Old though I am, for ladies' love unfit,
The power of beauty I remember yet.”—Chaucer.

tion of the health of my soul, than at any time heretofore. I do not repute it the more valiant for not being able to combat; my temptations are so broken and mortified, that they are not worth its opposition; holding but out my hands, I repel them. Should one present the old concupiscence before it, I fear it would have less power to resist it than heretofore; I do not discern that in itself it judges anything otherwise now than it formerly did, nor that it has acquired any new light: wherefore, if there be convalescence, 'tis an enchanted one. Miserable kind of remedy, to owe one's health to one's disease! 'Tis not that our misfortune should perform this office, but the good fortune of our judgment. I am not to be made to do anything by persecutions and afflictions, but to curse them: that is, for people who cannot be roused but by a whip. My reason is much more free in prosperity, and much more distracted, and put to't to digest pains than pleasures: I see best in a clear sky; health admonishes me more cheerfully, and to better purpose, than sickness. I did all that in me lay to reform and regulate myself from pleasures, at a time when I had health and vigour to enjoy them; I should be ashamed and envious that the misery and misfortune of my old age should have credit over my good healthful, sprightly, and vigorous years, and that men should estimate me, not by what I have been, but by what I have ceased to be.

In my opinion, 'tis the happy living, and not (as Antisthenes¹ said) the happy dying, in which human felicity consists. I have not made it my business to make a monstrous addition of a philosopher's tail to the head and body of a libertine;

¹ Diogenes Laertius, vi. 5.

nor would I have this wretched remainder give the lie to the pleasant, sound, and long part of my life: I would present myself uniformly throughout. Were I to live my life over again, I should live it just as I have lived it; I neither complain of the past, nor do I fear the future; and if I am not much deceived, I am the same within that I am without. 'Tis one main obligation I have to my fortune, that the succession of my bodily estate has been carried on according to the natural seasons; I have seen the grass, the blossom, and the fruit, and now see the withering; happily, however, because naturally. I bear the infirmities I have the better, because they came not till I had reason to expect them, and because also they make me with greater pleasure remember that long felicity of my past life. My wisdom may have been just the same in both ages, but it was more active, and of better grace whilst young and sprightly, than now it is when broken, peevish, and uneasy. I repudiate, then, these casual and painful reformations. God must touch our hearts; our consciences must amend of themselves, by the aid of our reason, and not by the decay of our appetites; pleasure is, in itself, neither pale nor discoloured, to be discerned by dim and decayed eyes.

We ought to love temperance for itself, and because God has commanded that and chastity; but that which we are reduced to by catarrhs, and for which I am indebted to the stone, is neither chastity nor temperance; a man cannot boast that he despises and resists pleasure if he cannot see it, if he knows not what it is, and cannot discern its graces, its force, and most alluring beauties; I know both the one and the other, and

may therefore the better say it. But, methinks, our souls in old age are subject to more troublesome maladies and imperfections than in youth; I said the same when young and when I was reproached with the want of a beard; and I say so now that my grey hairs give me some authority. We call the difficulty of our humours and the dis-relish of present things wisdom; but, in truth, we do not so much forsake vices as we change them, and in my opinion, for worse. Besides a foolish and feeble pride, an impertinent prating, froward and insociable humours, superstition, and a ridiculous desire of riches when we have lost the use of them, I find there more envy, injustice, and malice. Age imprints more wrinkles in the mind than it does on the face; and souls are never, or very rarely seen, that, in growing old, do not smell sour and musty. Man moves all together, both towards his perfection and decay. In observing the wisdom of Socrates, and many circumstances of his condemnation, I should dare to believe that he in some sort himself purposely, by collusion, contributed to it, seeing that, at the age of seventy years, he might fear to suffer the lofty motions of his mind to be cramped and his wonted lustre obscured.¹ What strange metamorphoses do I see age every day make in many of my acquaintance! 'Tis a potent malady, and that naturally and imperceptibly steals into us; a vast provision of study and great precaution are required to evade the imperfections it loads us with, or at least to weaken their progress. I find that, notwithstanding all my entrenchments, it gets foot by foot upon me: I make the best resistance I can, but I do

¹ Xenophon, indeed, tells us expressly that this was the purpose of Socrates in making so haughty a defence.

not know to what at last it will reduce me. But fall out what will, I am content the world may know, when I am fallen, from what I fell.

CHAPTER III OF THREE EMPLOYMENTS

WE must not rivet ourselves so fast to our humours and complexions: our chiefest sufficiency is to know how to apply ourselves to divers employments. 'Tis to be, but not to live, to keep a man's self tied and bound by necessity to one only course; those are the bravest souls that have in them the most variety and pliancy. Of this here is an honourable testimony of the elder Cato:—

"Hunc versatile ingenium sic pariter ad omnia fuit, ut natum ad id unum diceres, quodcumque ageret."¹

Had I liberty to set myself forth after my own mode, there is no so graceful fashion to which I would be so fixed as not to be able to disengage myself from it; life is an unequal, irregular and multiform motion. 'Tis not to be a friend to one's self, much less a master—'tis to be a slave, incessantly to be led by the nose by one's self, and to be so fixed in one's previous inclinations, that one cannot turn aside nor writhe one's neck out of the collar. I say this now in this part of my life, wherein I find I cannot easily disengage myself from the importunity of my soul, which cannot ordinarily amuse itself but in things of

¹ "His genius was so pliable to all uses, that one would say he had been born only to that which he was doing"—Livy, xxxix. 49. The same observation has been applied to Myrtilus the *Deipnosophist* by Athenaeus, and to Aristippus, of whom Montaigne commemorates the universal accomplishments elsewhere.

limited range, nor employ itself otherwise than entirely and with all its force; upon the lightest subject offered it expands and stretches it to that degree as therein to employ its utmost power; wherefore it is that idleness is to me a very painful labour, and very prejudicial to my health. Most men's minds require foreign matter to exercise and enliven them; mine has rather need of it to sit still and repose itself,—

“*Vitia otii negotio discutienda sunt,*”¹

for its chiefest and hardest study is to study itself. Books are to it a sort of employment that debauch it from its study. Upon the first thoughts that possess it, it begins to bustle and make trial of its vigour in all directions, exercises its power of handling, now making trial of force, now fortifying, moderating, and ranging itself by the way of grace and order. It has of its own wherewith to rouse its faculties: nature has given to it, as to all others, matter enough of its own to make advantage of, and subjects proper enough where it may either invent or judge.

Meditation is a powerful and full study to such as can effectually taste and employ themselves; I had rather fashion my soul than furnish it. There is no employment, either more weak or more strong, than that of entertaining a man's own thoughts, according as the soul is; the greatest men make it their whole business—

“*Quibus vivere est cogitare*”²,

nature has therefore favoured it with this privilege, that there is nothing we can do so long, nor any

¹ “The vices of sloth are to be shaken off by business.”—Seneca, *Ep.*, 56.

² “To whom to live is to think”—Cicero, *Tusc. Quæs.*, v. 28

action to which we more frequently and with greater facility addict ourselves. 'Tis the business of the gods, says Aristotle,¹ and from which both their beatitude and ours proceed.

The principal use of reading to me is, that by various objects it rouses my reason, and employs my judgment, not my memory. Few conversations detain me without force and effort; it is true that beauty and elegance of speech take as much or more with me than the weight and depth of the subject; and forasmuch as I am apt to be sleepy in all other communication, and give but the rind of my attention, it often falls out that in such poor and pitiful discourses, mere chatter, I either make drowsy, unmeaning answers, unbecoming a child, and ridiculous, or more foolishly and rudely still, maintain an obstinate silence. I have a pensive way that withdraws me into myself, and, with that, a heavy and childish ignorance of many very ordinary things, by which two qualities I have earned this, that men may truly relate five or six as ridiculous tales of me as of any other man whatever.

But, to proceed in my subject, this difficult complexion of mine renders me very nice in my conversation with men, whom I must cull and pick out for my purpose; and unfits me for common society. We live and negotiate with the people; if their conversation be troublesome to us, if we disdain to apply ourselves to mean and vulgar souls (and the mean and vulgar are often as regular as those of the finest thread, and all wisdom is folly that does not accommodate itself to the common ignorance), we must no more intermeddle either with other men's affairs or our own;

¹ *Nichom. Ethics*, x. 8

for business, both public and private, has to do with these people. The least forced and most natural motions of the soul are the most beautiful ; the best employments, those that are least strained. My God ! how good an office does wisdom to those whose desires it limits to their power ! that is the most useful knowledge : "according to what a man can," was the favourite sentence and motto of Socrates. A motto of great solidity.

We must moderate and adapt our desires to the nearest and easiest to be acquired things. Is it not a foolish humour of mine to separate myself from a thousand to whom my fortune has conjoined me, and without whom I cannot live, and cleave to one or two who are out of my intercourse ; or rather a fantastic desire of a thing I cannot obtain ? My gentle and easy manners, enemies of all sourness and harshness, may easily enough have secured me from envy and animosities ; to be beloved, I do not say, but never any man gave less occasion of being hated ; but the coldness of my conversation has, reasonably enough, deprived me of the goodwill of many, who are to be excused if they interpret it in another and worse sense.

I am very capable of contracting and maintaining rare and exquisite friendships ; for by reason that I so greedily seize upon such acquaintance as fit my liking, I throw myself with such violence upon them that I hardly fail to stick, and to make an impression where I hit ; as I have often made happy proof. In ordinary friendships I am somewhat cold and shy, for my motion is not natural, if not with full sail : besides which, my fortune having in my youth given me a relish for one sole and perfect friendship, has, in truth, created in me a kind of

distaste to others, and too much imprinted in my fancy that it is a beast of company, as the ancient said, but not of the herd.¹ And also I have a natural difficulty of communicating myself by halves, with the modifications and the servile and jealous prudence required in the conversation of numerous and imperfect friendships: and we are principally enjoined to these in this age of ours, when we cannot talk of the world but either with danger or falsehood.

Yet do I very well discern that he who has the conveniences (I mean the essential conveniences) of life for his end, as I have, ought to fly these difficulties and delicacy of humour, as much as the plague. I should commend a soul of several stages, that knows both how to stretch and to slacken itself, that finds itself at ease in all conditions whither fortune leads it; that can discourse with a neighbour, of his building, his hunting, his quarrels; that can chat with a carpenter or a gardener with pleasure. I envy those who can render themselves familiar with the meanest of their followers, and talk with them in their own way; and dislike the advice of Plato,² that men should always speak in a magisterial tone to their servants, whether men or women, without being sometimes facetious and familiar; for besides the reasons I have given, 'tis inhuman and unjust to set so great a value upon this pitiful prerogative of fortune, and the polities wherein less disparity is permitted betwixt masters and servants seem to me the most equitable. Others study how to raise and elevate their minds; I, how to humble mine and to bring it low; 'tis only vicious in extension:—

¹ Plutarch, *On the Plurality of Friends*, c. 2

² *Laws*, vi

“ Narras et genus *Æaci*,
Et pugnata sacro bella sub *Ilio* :
Quo *Chium* pretio cadum
Mercemur, quis aquam temperet ignibus,
Quo præbente domum, et quota,
Peligris caream frigoribus, taces.”¹

Thus, as the Lacedæmonian valour stood in need of moderation, and of the sweet and harmonious sound of flutes to soften it in battle, lest they should precipitate themselves into temerity and fury, whereas all other nations commonly make use of harsh and shrill sounds, and of loud and imperious cries, to incite and heat the soldier's courage to the last degree; so, methinks, contrary to the usual method, in the practice of our minds, we have for the most part more need of lead than of wings; of temperance and composedness than of ardour and agitation. But, above all things, 'tis in my opinion egregiously to play the fool, to put on the grave airs of a man of lofty mind amongst those who are nothing of the sort. ever to speak by the book:—

“ Favellare in punta di forchetta ”²

You must let yourself down to those with whom you converse; and sometimes affect ignorance: lay aside power and subtlety in common conversation; to preserve decorum and order 'tis enough—nay, crawl on the earth, if they so desire it.

The learned often stumble at this stone; they will always be parading their pedantic science, and strew their books everywhere; they have, in these

¹ “ You tell us about the race of *Æacus*, and the battles fought under sacred *Ilium*, at what price we buy a cask of *Chian* wine, who shall prepare the warm bath, and in whose house, and when I may escape from the Pelignian cold, there you are silent ”—Horace, *Od*, III. 19, 3.

² “ To talk with the point of a fork,” i.e. affectedly

days, so filled the cabinets and ears of the ladies with them, that if they have lost the substance, they at least retain the words; so as in all discourse upon all sorts of subjects, how mean and common soever, they speak and write after a new and learned way:—

“Hoc sermone pavent, hoc iram, gaudia, curas,
 Hoc cuncta effundunt animi secreta, quid ultra?
 Concubunt docte”¹,

and quote Plato and Aquinas in things the first man they meet could determine as well, the learning that cannot penetrate their souls hangs still upon the tongue.² If people of quality will be persuaded by me, they shall content themselves with setting out their proper and natural treasures; they conceal and cover their beauties under others that are none of theirs: 'tis a great folly to put out their own light and shine by a borrowed lustre they are interred and buried under the device of *Capsula totæ*.³

It is because they do not sufficiently know themselves or do themselves justice. the world has nothing fairer than they, 'tis for them to honour the arts, and to paint painting. What need have they of anything but to live beloved and honoured? They have and know but too much for this. they need do no more but rouse and heat a little the faculties they have of their own. When I see them tampering with rhetoric, law, logic, and other drugs, so improper and unnecessary for their

¹ “In this language do they express their fears, their anger, their joys, their cares; in this pour out all their secrets, what more? they lie with their lovers learnedly”—Juvenal, vi. 189

² It may be seen from this passage that *Les Précieuses* are of older date than those of the Hôtel de Rambouillet—Louandre

³ Seneca, *Ep.*, 115. Montaigne's words are *Soubz Part de Capsula totæ* The sense is, as if they were things carefully deposited in a band-box.

business, I begin to suspect that the men who inspire them with such fancies, do it that they may govern them upon that account; for what other excuse can I contrive? It is enough that they can, without our instruction, compose the graces of their eyes to gaiety, severity, sweetness, and season a denial with asperity, suspense, or favour: they need not another to interpret what we speak for their service; with this knowledge, they command with a switch, and rule both the tutors and the schools. But if, nevertheless, it angers them to give place to us in anything whatever, and will, out of curiosity, have their share in books, poetry is a diversion proper for them; 'tis a wanton, subtle, dissembling, and prating art, all pleasure and all show, like themselves. They may also abstract several commodities from history. In philosophy, out of the moral part of it, they may select such instructions as will teach them to judge of our humours and conditions, to defend themselves from our treacheries, to regulate the ardour of their own desires, to manage their liberty, to lengthen the pleasures of life, and gently to bear the inconstancy of a lover, the rudeness of a husband, and the importunity of years, wrinkles, and the like. This is the utmost of what I would allow them in the sciences.

There are some particular natures that are private and retired: my natural way is proper for communication, and apt to lay me open; I am all without and in sight, born for society and friendship. The solitude that I love myself and recommend to others, is chiefly no other than to withdraw my thoughts and affections into myself; to restrain and check, not my steps, but my own cares and desires, resigning all foreign solicitude,

and mortally avoiding servitude and obligation, and not so much the crowd of men as the crowd of business. Local solitude, to say the truth, rather gives me more room and sets me more at large; I more readily throw myself upon affairs of state and the world when I am alone. At the Louvre and in the bustle of the court, I fold myself within my own skin; the crowd thrusts me upon myself; and I never entertain myself so wantonly, with so much licence, or so especially, as in places of respect and ceremonious prudence: our follies do not make me laugh, it is our wisdom which does. I am naturally no enemy to a court life; I have therein passed a part of my own, and am of a humour cheerfully to frequent great company, provided it be by intervals and at my own time: but this softness of judgment whereof I speak ties me perforce to solitude. Even at home, amidst a numerous family, and in a house sufficiently frequented, I see people enough, but rarely such with whom I delight to converse; and I there reserve both for myself and others an unusual liberty: there is in my house no such thing as ceremony, ushering, or waiting upon people down to the coach, and such other troublesome ceremonies as our courtesy enjoins (O the servile and importunate custom!). Every one there governs himself according to his own method; let who will speak his thoughts, I sit mute, meditating and shut up in my closet, without any offence to my guests.

The men whose society and familiarity I covet are those they call sincere and able men; and the image of these makes me disrelish the rest. It is, if rightly taken, the rarest of our forms, and a form that we chiefly owe to nature. The end of this commerce is simply privacy, frequentation and

conference, the exercise of souls, without other fruit. In our discourse, all subjects are alike to me; let there be neither weight, nor depth, 'tis all one: there is yet grace and pertinency; all there is tinted with a mature and constant judgment, and mixed with goodness, freedom, gaiety, and friendship. 'Tis not only in talking of the affairs of kings and state that our wits discover their force and beauty, but every whit as much in private conferences. I understand my men even by their silence and smiles, and better discover them, perhaps, at table than in the council. Hippomachus said¹ very well, "that he could know the good wrestlers by only seeing them walk in the street." If learning please to step into our talk, it shall not be rejected; not magisterial, imperious, and importunate, as it commonly is, but suffragan and docile itself; we there only seek to pass away our time; when we have a mind to be instructed and preached to, we will go seek this in its throne; please let it humble itself to us for the nonce; for, useful and profitable as it is, I imagine that, at need, we may manage well enough without it, and do our business without its assistance. A well-descended soul, and practised in the conversation of men, will of herself render herself sufficiently agreeable; art is nothing but the counterpart and register of what such souls produce.

The conversation also of beautiful and honourable women is for me a sweet commerce:—

"Nam nos quoque oculos eruditos habemus"²

If the soul has not therein so much to enjoy, as in the first the bodily senses, which participate

¹ Plutarch, *Life of Dion.*, c. 1.

² "For we also have eyes that are versed in the matter"—Cicero, *Paradox*, v. 2

more of this, bring it to a proportion near to, though, in my opinion, not equal to the other. But 'tis a commerce wherein a man must stand a little upon his guard, especially those, where the body can do much, as in me. I¹ there scalded myself in my youth, and suffered all the torments that poets say befall those who precipitate themselves into love without order and judgment. It is true that that whipping has served me as a lesson:—

“Quicumque Argolicā de classe Capharea fugit,
Semper ab Euboicis vela retorquet aquis”²

'Tis folly to fix all a man's thoughts upon it, and to engage in it with a furious and indiscreet affection; but, on the other hand, to engage there without love and without inclination, like comedians, to play a common part, without putting anything to it of his own but words, is indeed to provide for his safety, but, withal, after as cowardly a manner as he who should abandon his honour, profit, or pleasure for fear of danger. For it is certain that from such a practice, they who set it on foot can expect no fruit that can please or satisfy a noble soul. A man must have, in good earnest, desired that which he, in good earnest, expects to have a pleasure in enjoying; I say, though fortune should unjustly favour their dissimulation, which often falls out, because there is none of the sex, let her be as ugly as the devil, who does not think herself well worthy to be beloved, and who does not prefer herself before other women, either for her youth, the colour of her hair, or her graceful motion (for there are no more women universally ugly, than

¹ “The burnt child dreads the fire,” here interpolates Cotton

² “Whoever of the Grecian fleet has escaped the Capharean rocks, ever takes care to steer from the Eubœan sea.”—Ovid, *Trust.*, l. 1, 83.

there are women universally beautiful,¹ and such of the Brahmin virgins as have nothing else to recommend them, the people being assembled by the common crier to that effect, come out into the market-place to expose their matrimonial parts to public view, to try if these at least are not of temptation sufficient to get them a husband). Consequently, there is not one who does not easily suffer herself to be overcome by the first vow that they make to serve her. Now from this common and ordinary treachery of the men of the present day, that must fall out which we already experimentally see, either that they rally together, and separate themselves by themselves to evade us, or else form their discipline by the example we give them, play their parts of the farce as we do ours, and give themselves up to the sport, without passion, care, or love:—

“Neque affectui suo, aut alieno, obnoxiae”²,

believing, according to the persuasion of Lysias in Plato,³ that they may with more utility and convenience surrender themselves up to us the less we love them; where it will fall out, as in comedies, that the people will have as much pleasure or more than the comedians. For my part, I no more acknowledge a Venus without a Cupid than a mother without issue: they are things that mutually lend and owe their essence to one another. Thus this cheat recoils upon him who is guilty of it; it does not cost him much, indeed, but he also gets little or nothing by it. They who have made Venus a goddess have taken notice that her

¹ Which Cotton translates “for generally there are no more foul than fair.”

² “Neither amenable to their own affections, nor those of others”—*Tacitus, Annal.*, xiii. 45.

³ In *Phædo*.

principal beauty was incorporeal and spiritual; but the Venus whom these people hunt after is not so much as human, nor indeed brutal; the very beasts will not accept it so gross and so earthly; we see that imagination and desire often heat and incite them before the body does; we see in both the one sex and the other, they have in the herd choice and particular election in their affections, and that they have amongst themselves a long commerce of good will. Even those to whom old age denies the practice of their desire, still tremble, neigh, and twitter for love; we see them, before the act, full of hope and ardour, and when the body has played its game, yet please themselves with the sweet remembrance of the past delight; some that swell with pride after they have performed, and others who, tired and sated, still by vociferation express a triumphing joy. He who has nothing to do but only to discharge his body of a natural necessity, need not trouble others with so curious preparations: it is not meat for a gross, coarse appetite.

As one who does not desire that men should think me better than I am, I will here say this as to the errors of my youth. Not only from the danger of impairing my health (and yet I could not be so careful but that I had two light mischances), but moreover upon the account of contempt, I have seldom given myself up to common and mercenary embraces: I would heighten the pleasure by the difficulty, by desire, and a certain kind of glory, and was of Tiberius's mind, who¹ in his amours was as much taken with modesty and birth as any other quality, and of the courtesan Flora's humour,² who

¹ Tacitus, *Annal.*, vi. 1

² Bayle, art *Flora*; Brantôme, *Les Femmes Galantes*.

never lent herself to less than a dictator, a consul, or a censor, and took pleasure in the dignity of her lovers. Doubtless pearls and gold tissue, titles and train, add something to it.

As to the rest, I had a great esteem for wit, provided the person was not exceptionable; for, to confess the truth, if the one or the other of these two attractions must of necessity be wanting, I should rather have quitted that of the understanding, that has its use in better things; but in the subject of love, a subject principally relating to the senses of seeing and touching, something may be done without the graces of the mind: without the graces of the body, nothing. Beauty is the true prerogative of women, and so peculiarly their own, that ours, though naturally requiring another sort of feature, is never in its lustre but when youthful and beardless, a sort of confused image of theirs. 'Tis said that such as serve the Grand Signior upon the account of beauty, who are an infinite number, are, at the latest, dismissed at two-and-twenty years of age. Reason, prudence, and the offices of friendship are better found amongst men, and therefore it is that they govern the affairs of the world.

These two engagements are fortuitous, and depending upon others; the one is troublesome by its rarity, the other withers with age, so that they could never have been sufficient for the business of my life. That of books, which is the third, is much more certain, and much more our own. It yields all other advantages to the two first, but has the constancy and facility of its service for its own share. It goes side by side with me in my whole course, and everywhere is assisting me: it comforts me in old age and solitude; it eases me of a

troublesome weight of idleness, and delivers me at all hours from company that I dislike: it blunts the point of griefs, if they are not extreme, and have not got an entire possession of my soul. To divert myself from a troublesome fancy, 'tis but to run to my books; they presently fix me to them and drive the other out of my thoughts, and do not mutiny at seeing that I have only recourse to them for want of other more real, natural, and lively commodities; they always receive me with the same kindness. He may well go a foot, they say, who leads his horse in his hand; and our James, King of Naples and Sicily, who, handsome, young and healthful, caused himself to be carried about on a barrow, extended upon a pitiful mattress in a poor robe of grey cloth, and a cap of the same, yet attended withal by a royal train, litters, led horses of all sorts, gentlemen and officers, did yet herein represent a tender and unsteady authority: "The sick man has not to complain who has his cure in his sleeve." In the experience and practice of this maxim, which is a very true one, consists all the benefit I reap from books. As a matter of fact, I make no more use of them, as it were, than those who know them not. I enjoy them as misers do their money, in knowing that I may enjoy them when I please: my mind is satisfied with this right of possession. I never travel without books, either in peace or war; and yet sometimes I pass over several days, and sometimes months, without looking on them. I will read by-and-by, say I to myself, or to-morrow, or when I please; and in the interim, time steals away without any inconvenience. For it is not to be imagined to what degree I please myself and rest content in this consideration, that I have them by me to divert myself with them

when I am so disposed, and to call to mind what a refreshment they are to my life. 'Tis the best viaticum I have yet found out for this human journey, and I very much pity those men of understanding who are unprovided of it. I the rather accept of any other sort of diversion, how light soever, because this can never fail me.

When at home, I a little more frequent my library, whence I overlook at once all the concerns of my family. 'Tis situated at the entrance into my house, and I thence see under me my garden, court, and base-court, and almost all parts of the building. There I turn over now one book, and then another, on various subjects, without method or design. One while I meditate, another I record and dictate, as I walk to and fro, such whimsies as these I present to you here. 'Tis in the third storey of a tower, of which the ground-room is my chapel, the second storey a chamber with a withdrawing-room and closet, where I often lie, to be more retired; and above is a great wardrobe. This formerly was the most useless part of the house. I there pass away both most of the days of my life and most of the hours of those days. In the night I am never there. There is by the side of it a cabinet handsome enough, with a fireplace very commodiously contrived, and plenty of light; and were I not more afraid of the trouble than the expense—the trouble that frights me from all business—I could very easily adjoin on either side, and on the same floor, a gallery of an hundred paces long and twelve broad, having found walls already raised for some other design to the requisite height. Every place of retirement requires a walk: my thoughts sleep if I sit still: my fancy does not go by itself, as when my legs move it: and all those

who study without a book are in the same condition. The figure of my study is round, and there is no more open wall than what is taken up by my table and my chair, so that the remaining parts of the circle present me a view of all my books at once, ranged upon five rows of shelves round about me. It has three noble and free prospects, and is sixteen paces in diameter. I am not so continually there in winter ; for my house is built upon an eminence, as its name imports, and no part of it is so much exposed to the wind and weather as this, which pleases me the better, as being of more difficult access and a little remote, as well upon the account of exercise, as also being there more retired from the crowd. 'Tis there that I am in my kingdom, and there I endeavour to make myself an absolute monarch, and to sequester this one corner from all society, conjugal, filial, and civil ; elsewhere I have but verbal authority only, and of a confused essence. That man, in my opinion, is very miserable, who has not at home where to be by himself, where to entertain himself alone, or to conceal himself from others. Ambition sufficiently plagues her proselytes, by keeping them always in show, like the statue of a public square :—

"Magna servitus est magna fortuna."¹

They cannot so much as be private in the water-closet.* I have thought nothing so severe in the austerity of life that our monks affect, as what I have observed in some of their communities ; namely, by rule, to have a perpetual society of place, and

¹ "A great fortune is a great slavery."—Seneca, *De Consol ad Polyb*, c 26

* "Ils n'ont pas seulement leur retrait pour retraict." But the *cabinet* was formerly almost everywhere a favourite rendezvous, not of men, but of women, even of rank, for gossip.

numerous persons present in every action whatever ; and think it much more supportable to be always alone than never to be so.

If any one shall tell me that it is to undervalue the Muses to make use of them only for sport and to pass away the time, I shall tell him, that he does not know so well as I the value of the sport, the pleasure, and the pastime ; I can hardly forbear to add that all other end is ridiculous. I live from day to day, and, with reverence be it spoken, I only live for myself ; there all my designs terminate. I studied, when young, for ostentation ; since, to make myself a little wiser ; and now for my diversion, but never for any profit. A vain and prodigal humour I had after this sort of furniture, not only for the supplying my own need, but, moreover, for ornament and outward show, I have since quite cured myself of.

Books have many charming qualities to such as know how to choose them ; but every good has its ill ; 'tis a pleasure that is not pure and clean, no more than others : it has its inconveniences, and great ones too. The soul indeed is exercised therein ; but the body, the care of which I must withal never neglect, remains in the meantime without action, and grows heavy and sombre. I know no excess more prejudicial to me, nor more to be avoided in this my declining age.

These have been my three favourite and particular occupations ; I speak not of those I owe to the world by civil obligation.

CHAPTER IV

OF DIVERSION

I WAS once employed in consoling a lady truly afflicted. Most of their mournings are artificial and ceremonious :—

“Uberibus semper lacrymis, semperque paratis,
In statione suâ, atque expectantibus illam,
Quo jubeat manare modo”¹.

A man goes the wrong way to work when he opposes this passion ; for opposition does but irritate and make them more obstinate in sorrow ; the evil is exasperated by discussion. We see, in common discourse, that what I have indifferently let fall from me, if any one takes it up to controvert it, I justify it with the best arguments I have ; and much more a thing wherein I had a real interest. And besides, in so doing you enter roughly upon your operation ; whereas the first addresses of a physician to his patient should be gracious, gay, and pleasing ; never did any ill-looking, morose physician do anything to purpose. On the contrary, then, a man should, at the first approaches, favour their grief and express some approbation of their sorrow. By this intelligence you obtain credit to proceed further, and by a facile and insensible gradation fall into discourses more solid and proper for their cure. I, whose aim it was principally to gull the company who had their eyes fixed upon me, took it into my head only to palliate the disease. And indeed I have found by experience that I have an unlucky hand in persuading. My arguments are either too sharp and dry, or pressed too roughly, or

¹ “A woman has ever a fountain of tears ready to gush up whenever she requires to make use of them.”—Juvenal, vi 272

not home enough. After I had some time applied myself to her grief, I did not attempt to cure her by strong and lively reasons, either because I had them not at hand, or because I thought to do my business better another way ; neither did I make choice of any of those methods of consolation which philosophy prescribes : that what we complain of is no evil, according to Cleanthes¹ ; that it is a light evil, according to the Peripatetics ; that to bemoan one's self is an action neither commendable nor just, according to Chrysippus ; nor this of Epicurus, more suitable to my way, of shifting the thoughts from afflicting things to those that are pleasing ; nor making a bundle of all these together, to make use of upon occasion, according to Cicero ; but, gently bending my discourse, and by little and little digressing, sometimes to subjects nearer, and sometimes more remote from the purpose, according as she was more intent on what I said, I imperceptibly led her from that sorrowful thought, and kept her calm and in good-humour whilst I continued there. I herein made use of diversion. They who succeeded me in the same service did not, for all that, find any amendment in her, for I had not gone to the root.

I, peradventure, may elsewhere have glanced upon some sort of public diversions ; and the practice of military ones, which Pericles² made use of in the Peloponnesian war, and a thousand others in other places, to withdraw the adverse forces from their own countries, is too frequent in history. It was an ingenious evasion³ whereby

¹ Cicero, *Tusc Quæs.*, iii. 31.

² Plutarch, in *Vita*.

³ The story is told in Commynes' Memoirs, Bk. ii., c. 3. Jacques de Hempricourt was a Knight of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, and wrote a work, still in MS., entitled *Le Miroir des Nobles de Hesbain et la Guerre d'Avans et de Waroux*, par moy Jacques d'Hempricourt, folio, 16th century, with many coats of arms emblazoned.

Monseigneur d'Hempricourt saved both himself and others in the city of Liege, into which the Duke of Burgundy, who kept it besieged, had made him enter to execute the articles of their promised surrender; the people, being assembled by night to consider of it, began to mutiny against the agreement, and several of them resolved to fall upon the commissioners, whom they had in their power; he, feeling the gusts of this first popular storm, who were coming to rush into his lodgings, suddenly sent out to them two of the inhabitants of the city (of whom he had some with him) with new and milder terms to be proposed in their council, which he had then and there contrived for his need. These two diverted the first tempest, carrying back the enraged rabble to the town-hall to hear and consider of what they had to say. The deliberation was short, a second storm arose as violent as the other, whereupon he despatched four new mediators of the same quality to meet them, protesting that he had now better conditions to present them with, and such as would give them absolute satisfaction, by which means the tumult was once more appeased, and the people again turned back to the conclave. In fine, by this dispensation of amusements, one after another, diverting their fury and dissipating it in frivolous consultations, he laid it at last asleep till the day appeared, which was his principal end.

This other story that follows is also of the same category. Atalanta, a virgin of excelling beauty and of wonderful disposition of body, to disengage herself from the crowd of a thousand suitors who sought her in marriage, made this proposition, that she would accept of him for her husband who should equal her in running, upon condition that they who failed should lose their lives. There were enough

who thought the prize very well worth the hazard, and who suffered the cruel penalty of the contract. Hippomenes, about to make trial after the rest, made his address to the goddess of love, imploring her assistance ; and she, granting his request, gave him three golden apples, and instructed him how to use them. The race beginning, as Hippomenes perceived his mistress to press hard up to him, he, as it were by chance, let fall one of these apples ; the maid, taken with the beauty of it, failed not to step out of her way to pick it up.—

“Obstupuit virgo, nitidique cupidine pomi
Declinat cursus, aurumque volubile tollit ”¹

He did the same, when he saw his time, by the second and the third, till by so diverting her, and making her lose so much ground, he won the race. When physicians cannot stop a catarrh, they divert and turn it into some other less dangerous part. And I find also that this is the most ordinary practice for the diseases of the mind.—

“Abducendus etiam nonnunquam animus est ad alia studia, sollicitudines, curas, negotia loci denique mutatione, tanquam segroti non convalescentes, saepe curandus est.”²

‘Tis to little effect directly to jostle a man’s infirmities, we neither make him sustain nor repel the attack ; we only make him decline and evade it.

This other lesson is too high and too difficult : ‘tis for men of the first form of knowledge purely to insist upon the thing, to consider and judge it ; it appertains to one sole Socrates to meet death with an ordinary countenance, to grow acquainted

¹ “The virgin, astonished and attracted by the glittering apple, stops her career, and seizes the rolling gold”—Ovid, *Metam.*, x. 666.

² “The mind is sometimes to be diverted to other studies, thoughts, cares, business in fine, by change of place, as where sick persons do not become convalescent.”—Cicero, *Tusc Quæs.*, iv. 35

with it, and to sport with it ; he seeks no consolation out of the thing itself ; dying appears to him a natural and indifferent accident ; 'tis there that he fixes his sight and resolution, without looking elsewhere. The disciples of Hegesias,¹ who starved themselves to death, animated thereunto by his fine lectures, and in such numbers that King Ptolemy ordered he should be forbidden to entertain his followers with such homicidal doctrines, did not consider death in itself, neither did they judge of it ; it was not there they fixed their thoughts ; they ran towards and aimed at a new being.

The poor wretches whom we see brought upon the scaffold, full of ardent devotion, and therein, as much as in them lies, employing all their senses, their ears in hearing the instructions given them, their eyes and hands lifted up towards heaven, their voices in loud prayers, with a vehement and continual emotion, do doubtless things very commendable and proper for such a necessity : we ought to commend them for their devotion, but not properly for their constancy ; they shun the encounter, they divert their thoughts from the consideration of death, as children are amused with some toy or other when the surgeon is going to give them a prick with his lancet. I have seen some, who, casting their eyes upon the dreadful instruments of death round about, have fainted, and furiously turned their thoughts another way ; such as are to pass a formidable precipice are advised either to shut their eyes or to look another way.

Subrius Flavius, being by Nero's command to be put to death, and by the hand of Niger, both of them great captains, when they lead him to the

¹ Cicero, *Tusc Quæs.*, 1. 34.

place appointed for his execution, seeing the grave that Niger had caused to be hollowed to put him into ill-made: "Neither is this," said he, turning to the soldiers who guarded him, "according to military discipline." And to Niger, who exhorted him to keep his head firm: "Do but thou strike as firmly," said he.¹ And he very well foresaw what would follow when he said so; for Niger's arm so trembled that he had several blows at his head before he could cut it off. This man seems to have had his thoughts rightly fixed upon the subject

He who dies in a battle, with his sword in his hand, does not then think of death; he feels or considers it not, the ardour of the fight diverts his thought another way. A worthy man of my acquaintance, falling as he was fighting a duel, and feeling himself nailed to the earth by nine or ten thrusts of his enemy, every one present called to him to think of his conscience; but he has since told me, that though he very well heard what they said, it nothing moved him, and that he never thought of anything but how to disengage and revenge himself. He afterwards killed his man in that very duel. He who brought to L. Silanus the sentence of death, did him a very great kindness, in that, having received his answer, that he was well prepared to die, but not by base hands, he ran upon him with his soldiers to force him, and as he, unarmed as he was, obstinately defended himself with his fists and feet, he made him lose his life in the contest, by that means dissipating and diverting in a sudden and furious rage the painful apprehension of the lingering death to which he was designed.

¹ Tacitus, *Annal*, xv. 67

We always think of something else; either the hope of a better life comforts and supports us, or the hope of our children's worth, or the future glory of our name, or the leaving behind the evils of this life, or the vengeance that threatens those who are the causes of our death, administers consolation to us:—

"Spero equidem medius, si quid pia numina possunt,
Supplicia hausurum scopolis, et nomine Dido
Sæpe vocaturum. .
Audiam; et hæc Manes veniet mihi fama sub imos."¹

Xenophon was sacrificing with a crown upon his head when one came to bring him news of the death of his son Gryllus, slain in the battle of Mantinea: at the first surprise of the news, he threw his crown to the ground; but understanding by the sequel of the narrative the manner of a most brave and valiant death, he took it up and replaced it upon his head.² Epicurus himself, at his death, consoles himself upon the utility and eternity of his writings³:—

"Omnes clari et nobilitati labores fiunt tolerabiles"⁴,

and the same wound, the same fatigue, is not, says Xenophon,⁵ so intolerable to a general of an army as to a common soldier. Epaminondas took his death much more cheerfully, having been informed that the victory remained to him⁶:—

¹ "I hope, however, if the pious gods have any power, thou wilt feel thy punishment amid the rocks, and will call on the name of Dido, I shall hear, and this report will come to me below"—*Aeneid*, iv. 382, 387

² Valerius Maximus, iv. 10, Ext. 2.

³ In his letter to Hermachus or Idomeneus Cicero, *De Finib*, ii. 20; Diogenes Laertius, x. 22

⁴ "All labours that are illustrious and famous become supportable"—Cicero, *Tusc. Quæs.*, ii. 26

⁵ *Idem, ibid.*

⁶ Cornelius Nepos, in *Vita*, c. 9

"Hæc sunt solatia, hæc fomenta summorum dolorum "¹ ; and such like circumstances amuse, divert, and turn our thoughts from the consideration of the thing in itself. Even the arguments of philosophy are always edging and glancing on the matter, so as scarce to rub its crust ; the greatest man of the first philosophical school, and superintendent over all the rest, the great Zeno, forms this syllogism against death : "No evil is honourable ; but death is honourable ; therefore death is no evil "² ; against drunkenness this : "No one commits his secrets to a drunkard ; but every one commits his secrets to a wise man : therefore a wise man is no drunkard."³ Is this to hit the white ? I love to see that these great and leading souls cannot rid themselves of our company : perfect men as they are, they are yet simply men.

Revenge is a sweet passion, of great and natural impression ; I discern it well enough, though I have no manner of experience of it. From this not long ago to divert a young prince, I did not tell him that he must, to him that had struck him upon the one cheek, turn the other, upon account of charity ; nor go about to represent to him the tragical events that poetry attributes to this passion. I left that behind ; and I busied myself to make him relish the beauty of a contrary image : and, by representing to him what honour, esteem, and goodwill he would acquire by clemency and good nature, diverted him to ambition. Thus a man is to deal in such cases.

If your passion of love be too violent, disperse it, say they, and they say true ; for I have often

¹ "These are sedatives and alleviations to the greatest pains"—Cicero, *Tusc. Quæss*, II. 23

² Seneca, *Ep.*, 82

³ Idem, *ibid.*, 83.

tried it with advantage: break it into several desires, of which let one be regent, if you will, over the rest; but, lest it should tyrannise and domineer over you, weaken and protract, by dividing and diverting it¹:-

“Cum morosa vago singultet inguine vena,”²

“Conjicito humorem collectum in corpora quæque,”³

and provide for it in time, lest it prove troublesome to deal with, when it has once seized you —

“Si non prima novis conturbes vulnera plagis,
Volgivagaque vagus Venere ante recentia cures.”⁴

I was once wounded with a vehement displeasure, and withal, more just than vehement; I might per-adventure have lost myself in it, if I had merely trusted to my own strength. Having need of a powerful diversion to disengage me, by art and study I became amorous, wherein I was assisted by my youth: love relieved and rescued me from the evil wherein friendship had engaged me. 'Tis in everything else the same; a violent imagination hath seized me: I find it a nearer way to change than to subdue it: I depute, if not one contrary, yet another at least, in its place. Variation ever relieves, dissolves, and dissipates.

If I am not able to contend with it, I escape

¹ The corresponding passage in Florio's version (1613) is — “If your affection in love be over-powerful, disperse or dissipate the same, say they, and they say true, for I have often with profit made trial of it. Break it by the virtue of several desires, of which one may be regent or chief Master, if you please, but for fear it should misuse and tyrannise you, weaken it with dividing, and protract it with diverting the same”

² “When you are tormented with fierce desire, satisfy it with the first person that presents herself”—Persius, *Sat.* vi. 72.

³ Lucretius, vi. 1062, to the like effect

⁴ “Unless you cure old wounds by new.”—Lucretius, iv. 1064.

from it ; and in avoiding it, slip out of the way, and make my doubles ; shifting place, business, and company, I secure myself in the crowd of other thoughts and fancies, where it loses my trace, and I escape.

After the same manner does nature proceed, by the benefit of inconstancy ; for time, which she has given us for the sovereign physician of our passions, chiefly works by this, that supplying our imaginations with other and new affairs, it loosens and dissolves the first apprehension, how strong soever. A wise man little less sees his friend dying at the end of five-and-twenty years than on the first year ; and according to Epicurus, no less at all ; for he did not attribute any alleviation of afflictions, either to their foresight or their antiquity ; but so many other thoughts traverse this, that it languishes and tires at last.

Alcibiades,¹ to divert the inclination of common rumours, cut off the ears and tail of his beautiful dog, and turned him out into the public place, to the end that, giving the people this occasion to prate, they might let his other actions alone. I have also seen, for this same end of diverting the opinions and conjectures of the people and to stop their mouths, some women conceal their real affections by those that were only counterfeit, but I have also seen some of them, who in counterfeiting have suffered themselves to be caught indeed, and who have quitted the true and original affection for the feigned : and so have learned that they who find their affections well placed are fools to consent to this disguise : the public and favourable reception being only reserved for this pretended lover, one may conclude him a fellow of very little address and less wit, if he does not in the end put

¹ Plutarch, in *Vita*, c. 4.

himself into your place, and you into his ; this is precisely to cut out and make up a shoe for another to draw on.

A little thing will turn and divert us, because a little thing holds us. We do not much consider subjects in gross and singly ; they are little and superficial circumstances or images that touch us, and the outward useless rinds that peel off from the subjects themselves :—

“Folliculos ut nunc teretes æstate cicadæ
Linquunt ”¹

Even Plutarch himself laments his daughter for the monkeyish tricks of her infancy.² The remembrance of a farewell, of the particular grace of an action, of a last recommendation, afflict us. The sight of Cæsar’s robe troubled all Rome, which was more than his death had done. Even the sound of names ringing in our ears, as “my poor master,” “my faithful friend,” “alas, my dear father,” or, “my sweet daughter,” afflict us. When these repetitions annoy me, and that I examine it a little nearer, I find ‘tis no other but a grammatical and word complaint ; I am only wounded with the word and tone, as the exclamations of preachers very often work more upon their auditory than their reasons, and as the pitiful eyes of a beast killed for our service ; without my weighing or penetrating meanwhile into the true and solid essence of my subject :—

“ His se stimulis dolor ipse lacessit ”³

These are the foundations of our mourning.
The obstinacy of my stone to all remedies,

¹ “As the grasshoppers now leave the husks behind in summer.”—Lucretius, v. 801

² *Consolation to his Wife on the Death of their Daughter*, c. 1.

³ “With these incitements grief provokes itself”—Lucretius, ii. 42.

especially those in my bladder, has sometimes thrown me into so long suppressions of urine for three or four days together, and so near death, that it had been folly to have hoped to evade it, and it was much rather to have been desired, considering the miseries I endure in those cruel fits. Oh, that good emperor,¹ who caused criminals to be tied that they might die for want of urination, was a great master in the hangman's science! Finding myself in this condition, I considered by how many light causes and objects imagination nourished in me the regret of life; of what atoms the weight and difficulty of this dislodging was composed in my soul; to how many idle and frivolous thoughts we give way in so great an affair; a dog, a horse, a book, a glass, and what not, were considered in my loss; to others their ambitious hopes, their money, their knowledge, not less foolish considerations in my opinion than mine. I look upon death carelessly when I look upon it universally as the end of life. I insult over it in gross, but in detail it domineers over me - the tears of a footman, the disposing of my clothes, the touch of a friendly hand, a common consolation, discourages and softens me. So do the complaints in tragedies agitate our souls with grief; and the regrets of Dido and Ariadne, impassionate even those who believe them not in Virgil and Catullus. 'Tis a symptom of an obstinate and obdurate nature to be sensible of no emotion, as 'tis reported for a miracle of Polemon, but then he did not so much as alter his countenance at the biting of a mad dog that tore away the calf of his leg²; and no wisdom proceeds so far as to conceive so vivid and entire a cause of sorrow, by

¹ Tiberius Suetonius, in *Vita*, c. 62.

² Diogenes Laertius, in *Vita*, c. 17

judgment that it does not suffer increase by its presence, when the eyes and ears have their share; parts that are not to be moved but by vain accidents.

Is it reason that even the arts themselves should make an advantage of our natural stupidity and weakness? An orator, says rhetoric in the farce of his pleading, shall be moved with the sound of his own voice and feigned emotions, and suffer himself to be imposed upon by the passion he represents; he will imprint in himself a true and real grief, by means of the part he plays, to transmit it to the judges, who are yet less concerned than he: as they do who are hired at funerals to assist in the ceremony of sorrow, who sell their tears and mourning by weight and measure; for although they act in a borrowed form, nevertheless, by habituating and settling their countenances to the occasion, 'tis most certain they often are really affected with an actual sorrow. I was one, amongst several others of his friends, who conveyed the body of Monsieur de Grammont¹ to Soissons from the siege of La Fere, where he was slain; I observed that in all places we passed through we filled the people we met with lamentations and tears by the mere solemn pomp of our convoy, for the name of the defunct was not there so much as known. Quintilian reports² to have seen comedians so deeply engaged in a mourning part, that they still wept in the retiring room, and who, having taken upon them to stir up passion in another, have themselves espoused it to that degree as to find themselves infected with it, not only to tears, but, moreover,

¹ Philibert, Comte de Grammont et de Guiche, husband of La Belle Corisande He was killed in 1580

² *Instit. Orat.*, vi. 2, sub. fin.

with pallor and the comportment of men really overwhelmed with grief.

In a country near our mountains the women play *Prestre-martin*, for as they augment the regret of the deceased husband by the remembrance of the good and agreeable qualities he possessed, they also at the same time make a register of and publish his imperfections; as if of themselves to enter into some composition, and divert themselves from compassion to disdain. Yet with much better grace than we, who, when we lose an acquaintance, strive to give him new and false praises, and to make him quite another thing when we have lost sight of him than he appeared to us when we did see him; as if regret were an instructive thing, or as if tears, by washing our understandings, cleared them. For my part, I henceforth renounce all favourable testimonies men would give of me, not because I shall be worthy of them, but because I shall be dead.

Whoever shall ask a man, "What interest have you in this siege?" "The interest of example," he will say, "and of the common obedience to my prince: I pretend to no profit by it; and for glory, I know how small a part can affect a private man such as I. I have here neither passion nor quarrel." And yet you shall see him the next day quite another man, chafing and red with fury, ranged in battle for the assault; 'tis the glittering of so much steel, the fire and noise of our cannon and drums, that have infused this new rigidity and fury into his veins. A frivolous cause, you will say. How a cause? There needs none to agitate the mind; a mere whimsy without body and without subject will rule and agitate it. Let me set to building *chateaux d'Espagne*, my imagination

suggests to me conveniences and pleasures with which my soul is really tickled and pleased. How often do we torment our mind with anger or sorrow by such shadows, and engage ourselves in fantastic passions that impair both soul and body? What astonished, fleering, confused grimaces does this raving put our faces into! what sallies and agitations both of members and voices does it inspire us with! Does it not seem that this individual man has false visions amid the crowd of others with whom he has to do, or that he is possessed with some internal demon that persecutes him? Inquire of yourself where is the object of this mutation? is there anything but us in nature which inanity sustains, over which it has power? Cambyses, from having dreamt that his brother should be one day king of Persia, put him to death: a beloved brother, and one in whom he had always confided.¹ Aristodemus, king of the Messenians, killed himself out of a fancy of ill omen, from I know not what howling of his dogs², and King Midas did as much upon the account of some foolish dream he had dreamed.³ 'Tis to prize life at its just value, to abandon it for a dream. And yet hear the soul triumph over the miseries and weakness of the body, and that it is exposed to all attacks and alterations; truly, it has reason so to speak!—

“ O prima infelix finger t: terra Prometheo!
Ille parum cauti pectoris egit opus.

Corpora disponens, mentem non vidit in arte,
Recta animi primum debuit esse via ”⁴

¹ Herodotus, III 30

² Plutarch, *On Superstition*, c 9

³ Idem, *ibid*

⁴ “ O wretched clay, first formed by Prometheus. In his attempt, what little wisdom did he shew! In framing bodies, he did not apply his art to form the mind, which should have been his first care ”⁵—
Propertius, III 5, 7

CHAPTER V

UPON SOME VERSES OF VIRGIL

By how much profitable thoughts are more full and solid, by so much are they also more cumbersome and heavy vice, death, poverty, diseases, are grave and grievous subjects. A man should have his soul instructed in the means to sustain and to contend with evils, and in the rules of living and believing well: and often rouse it up, and exercise it in this noble study, but in an ordinary soul it must be by intervals and with moderation, it will otherwise grow besotted if continually intent upon it. I found it necessary, when I was young, to put myself in mind and solicit myself to keep me to my duty; gaiety and health do not, they say, so well agree with those grave and serious meditations: I am at present in another state: the conditions of age but too much put me in mind, urge me to wisdom, and preach to me. From the excess of sprightliness I am fallen into that of severity, which is much more troublesome; and for that reason I now and then suffer myself purposely a little to run into disorder, and occupy my mind in wanton and youthful thoughts, wherewith it diverts itself. I am of late but too reserved, too heavy, and too ripe; years every day read to me lectures of coldness and temperance. This body of mine avoids disorder and dreads it; 'tis now my body's turn to guide my mind towards reformation; it governs, in turn, and more rudely and imperiously than the other; it lets me not an hour alone, sleeping or waking, but is always preaching to me death, patience, and repentance. I now defend myself from temperance, as I have formerly done from pleasure, it draws

me too much back, and even to stupidity. Now I will be master of myself, to all intents and purposes ; wisdom has its excesses, and has no less need of moderation than folly. Therefore, lest I should wither, dry up, and overcharge myself with prudence, in the intervals and truces my infirmities allow me :—

“ *Mens intenta suis ne foret usque malis.*”¹

I gently turn aside, and avert my eyes from the stormy and cloudy sky I have before me, which, thanks be to God, I regard without fear, but not without meditation and study, and amuse myself in the remembrance of my better years :—

“ *Animus quo perdidit, optat,
Atque in præteritâ se totus imagine versat.*”²

Let childhood look forward and age backward ; was not this the signification of Janus' double face ? Let years draw me along if they will, but it shall be backward ; as long as my eyes can discern the pleasant season expired, I shall now and then turn them that way ; though it escape from my blood and veins, I shall not, however, root the image of it out of my memory :—

“ *Hoc est
Vivere bis, vitâ posse priore frui.*”³

Plato ordains⁴ that old men should be present at the exercises, dances, and sports of young people, that they may rejoice in others for the activity and beauty of body which is no more in themselves, and call to mind the grace and comeliness of that

¹ “ That my mind may not eternally be intent upon my ills ”—Ovid, *Trist.*, iv 1, 4

² “ The mind wishes to have what it has lost, and throws itself wholly into memories of the past ”—Petronius, c 128

³ “ Tis to live twice to be able to enjoy one's former life again ”—Martial, x. 23, 7.

⁴ *Laws*, ii.

flourishing age ; and wills that in these recreations the honour of the prize should be given to that young man who has most diverted the company. I was formerly wont to mark cloudy and gloomy days as extraordinary ; these are now my ordinary days ; the extraordinary are the clear and bright ; I am ready to leap for joy, as for an unwonted favour, when nothing happens me. Let me tickle myself, I cannot force a poor smile from this wretched body of mine ; I am only merry in conceit and in dreaming, by artifice to divert the melancholy of age ; but, in faith, it requires another remedy than a dream. A weak contest of art against nature. 'Tis great folly to lengthen and anticipate human incommodities, as every one does ; I had rather be a less while old than be old before I am really so.¹ I seize on even the least occasions of pleasure I can meet. I know very well, by hearsay, several sorts of prudent pleasures, effectually so, and glorious to boot ; but opinion has not power enough over me to give me an appetite to them. I covet not so much to have them magnanimous, magnificent, and pompous, as I do to have them sweet, facile, and ready :—

“ *A naturā discedimus, populo nos damus, nullius rei bono auctori* ”²

My philosophy is in action, in natural and present practice, very little in fancy : what if I should take pleasure in playing at *noisettes* [Odd or even ?] or at top ?³—

“ *Non ponebat enim rumores ante salutem.* ”⁴

¹ Cicero, *De Senectute*, c. 19

² “ We depart from nature and give ourselves to the people, who understand nothing ”—Seneca, *Ep.*, 99

³ *A la soupe*, probably the older-fashioned round Dutch toy, not our pear-shaped peg one.

⁴ “ He did not sacrifice his health even to rumours.”—Ennius, *apud Cicero, De Offic.*, 1. 24.

Pleasure is a quality of very little ambition ; it thinks itself rich enough of itself without any addition of repute ; and is best pleased where most retired. A young man should be whipped who pretends to a taste in wine and sauces ; there was nothing which, at that age, I less valued or knew : now I begin to learn ; I am very much ashamed on't ; but what should I do ? I am more ashamed and vexed at the occasions that put me upon't. 'Tis for us to dote and trifle away the time, and for young men to stand upon their reputation and nice punctilios ; they are going towards the world and the world's opinion ; we are retiring from it.—

"Sibi arma, sibi equos, sibi hastas, sibi clavam, sibi pilam, sibi natationes, et cursus habeant nobis senibus, ex lusionibus multis, talos relinquant et tesseras"¹,

the laws themselves send us home.² I can do no less in favour of this wretched condition into which my age has thrown me than furnish it with toys to play withal, as they do children ; and, in truth, we become such. Both wisdom and folly will have enough to do to support and relieve me by alternate services in this calamity of age.—

"Misce stultitiam consilus brevem"³

I accordingly avoid the lightest punctures ; and those that formerly would not have rippled the skin, now pierce me through and through my habit of body is now so naturally declining to ill :—

"In fragili corpore odiosa omnis offensio est"⁴.

¹ "Let them reserve to themselves arms, horses, spears, clubs, tennis, swimming, and races, and of many sports leave to us old men cards and dice"—Cicero, *De Senec.*, c. 16

² Idem, *ibid.*, c. 11

³ Mingle with counsels a brief interval of folly."—Horace, *Od.*, iv. 12, 27

⁴ "In a fragile body every shock is obnoxious"—Cicero, *De Senec.*, c. 18

“Mensque pati durum sustinet ægra nihil.”¹

I have ever been very susceptibly tender as to offences: I am much more tender now, and open throughout.

“Et minima vires frangere quassa valent”²

My judgment restrains me from kicking against and murmuring at the inconveniences that nature orders me to endure, but it does not take away my feeling them. I, who have no other thing in my aim but to live and be merry, would run from one end of the world to the other to seek out one good year of pleasant and jocund tranquillity. A melancholic and dull tranquillity may be enough for me, but it benumbs and stupefies me; I am not contented with it. If there be any person, any knot of good company in country or city, in France or elsewhere, resident or in motion, who can like my humour, and whose humours I can like, let them but whistle and I will run and furnish them with essays in flesh and bone.

Seeing it is the privilege of the mind to rescue itself from old age, I advise mine to it with all the power I have; let it meanwhile continue green, and flourish if it can, like mistletoe upon a dead tree. But I fear 'tis a traitor; it has contracted so strict a fraternity with the body that it leaves me at every turn, to follow that in its need. I wheedle and deal with it apart in vain; I try in vain to wean it from this correspondence, to no effect quote to it Seneca and Catullus, and ladies and royal masques; if its companion have the

¹ “And the infirm mind can bear no difficult exertion.”—Ovid, *De Ponto*, i. 5, 18

² “And little force suffices to break what was cracked before”—Ovid, *De Trist.*, iii. 11, 22

stone, it seems to have it too ; even the faculties that are most peculiarly and properly its own cannot then perform their functions, but manifestly appear stupefied and asleep ; there is no sprightliness in its productions, if there be not at the same time an equal proportion in the body too.

Our masters are to blame, that in searching out the causes of the extraordinary emotions of the soul, besides attributing it to a divine ecstasy, love, martial fierceness, poesy, wine, they have not also attributed a part to health : a boiling, vigorous, full, and lazy health, such as formerly the verdure of youth and security, by fits, supplied me withal ; that fire of sprightliness and gaiety darts into the mind flashes that are lively and bright beyond our natural light, and of all enthusiasms the most jovial, if not the most extravagant.

It is, then, no wonder if a contrary state stupefy and clog my spirit, and produce a contrary effect :—

“ *Ad nullum consurgit opus, cum corpore languet* ”¹,
 and yet would have me obliged to it for giving, as it wants to make out, much less consent to this stupidity than is the ordinary case with men of my age. Let us, at least, whilst we have truce, drive away incommodities and difficulties from our commerce :—

“ *Dum licet, obducta solvatur fronte senectus* ”²

“ *Tetrica sunt amoenanda jocularibus* ”³

¹ “ It rises to no effort ; it languishes with the body ”—*Pseudo-Gallus*, 1. 125.

² “ Whilst we can, let us banish old age from the brow.”—*Herod.*, *Ep.*, xiii. 7

³ “ Sour things are to be sweetened with those that are pleasant.”—*Sidonius Apollin.*, *Ep.*, 1. 9

I love a gay and civil wisdom, and fly from all sourness and austerity of manners, all repellent mien being suspected by me :—

“Tristemque vultus tetrici arrogantium”¹ :

“Et habet tristis quoque turba cinædos.”²

I am very much of Plato's opinion, who says that facile or harsh humours are great indications of the good or ill disposition of the mind. Socrates had a constant countenance, but serene and smiling, not sourly austere, like the elder Crassus, whom no one ever saw laugh.³ Virtue is a pleasant and gay quality.

I know very well that few will quarrel with the licence of my writings, who have not more to quarrel with in the licence of their own thoughts : I conform myself well enough to their inclinations, but I offend their eyes. 'Tis a fine humour to strain the writings of Plato, to wrest his pretended intercourses with Phædo, Dion, Stella,⁴ and Archeanassa :—

“Non pudeat dicere, quod non pudet sentire”⁵

I hate a foward and dismal spirit, that slips over all the pleasures of life and seizes and feeds upon misfortunes ; like flies, that cannot stick to a smooth and polished body, but fix and repose themselves upon craggy and rough places, and like cupping-glasses, that only suck and attract bad blood.

As to the rest, I have enjoined myself to dare to say all that I dare to do ; even thoughts that

¹ “The arrogant sadness of a crabbed face”—*Auctor Incert.*

² “And the dull crowd also has its voluptuaries.”—*Idem.*

³ Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, vii. 19.

⁴ Montaigne gives the Latin form of the Greek name Aster.

⁵ “Let us not be ashamed to speak what we are not ashamed to think.”

are not to be published, displease me ; the worst of my actions and qualities do not appear to me so evil as I find it evil and base not to dare to own them. Every one is wary and discreet in confession, but men ought to be so in action ; the boldness of doing ill is in some sort compensated and restrained by the boldness of confessing it. Whoever will oblige himself to tell all, should oblige himself to do nothing that he must be forced to conceal. I wish that this excessive licence of mine may draw men to freedom, above these timorous and mincing virtues sprung from our imperfections, and that at the expense of my immoderation I may reduce them to reason. A man must see and study his vice to correct it ; they who conceal it from others, commonly conceal it from themselves ; and do not think it close enough, if they themselves see it : they withdraw and disguise it from their own consciences .—

“Quare vitia sua nemo confitetur? Quia etiam nunc in illis est ; somnium narrare vigilantis est.”¹

The diseases of the body explain themselves by their increase, we find that to be the gout which we called a rheum or a strain ; the diseases of the soul, the greater they are, keep themselves the most obscure ; the most sick are the least sensible ; therefore it is that with an unrelenting hand they most often, in full day, be taken to task, opened, and torn from the hollow of the heart. As in doing well, so in doing ill, the mere confession is sometimes satisfaction. Is there any deformity in doing amiss, that can excuse us from confessing ourselves? It is so great a pain to me to dis-

¹ “Why does no man confess his vices? because he is yet in them ; 'tis for a waking man to tell his dream.”—Seneca, *Ep.*, 53

semble, that I evade the trust of another's secrets, wanting the courage to disavow my knowledge. I can keep silent, but deny I cannot without the greatest trouble and violence to myself imaginable: to be very secret, a man must be so by nature, not by obligation. 'Tis little worth, in the service of a prince, to be secret, if a man be not a liar to boot. If he who asked Thales the Milesian whether he ought solemnly to deny that he had committed adultery, had applied himself to me, I should have told him that he ought not to do it; for I look upon lying as a worse fault than the other. Thales advised him quite contrary,¹ bidding him swear to shield the greater fault by the less: nevertheless, this counsel was not so much an election as a multiplication of vice. Upon which let us say this in passing, that we deal liberally with a man of conscience when we propose to him some difficulty in counterpoise of vice; but when we shut him up betwixt two vices, he is put to a hard choice: as Origen was either to idolatrise or to suffer himself to be carnally abused by a great Ethiopian slave they brought to him. He submitted to the first condition, and wrongly, people say. Yet those women of our times are not much out, according to their error, who protest they had rather burden their consciences with ten men than one mass.

If it be indiscretion so to publish one's errors, yet there is no great danger that it pass into example and custom; for Ariston said,² that the winds men most fear are those that lay them open. We must tuck up this ridiculous rag that hides our

¹ Montaigne's memory here serves him ill, for the question being put to Thales, his answer was "But is not perjury worse than adultery?"—Diogenes Laertius, *in Vitâ*, 1. 36

² Plutarch, *On Curiosity*, c. 3

manners : they send their consciences to the stews, and keep a starched countenance : even traitors and assassins espouse the laws of ceremony, and there fix their duty. So that neither can injustice complain of incivility, nor malice of indiscretion. 'Tis pity but a bad man should be a fool to boot, and that outward decency should palliate his vice : this rough-cast only appertains to a good and sound wall, that deserves to be preserved and whitened.

In favour of the Huguenots, who condemn our auricular and private confession, I confess myself in public, religiously and purely : St. Augustin, Origen, and Hippocrates have published the errors of their opinions ; I, moreover, of my manners. I am greedy of making myself known,¹ and I care not to how many, provided it be truly ; or to say better, I hunger for nothing ; but I mortally hate to be mistaken by those who happen to learn my name. He who does all things for honour and glory, what can he think to gain by shewing himself to the world in a vizor, and by concealing his true being from the people ? Praise a humpback for his stature, he has reason to take it for an affront : if you are a coward, and men commend you for your valour, is it of you they speak ? They take you for another. I should like him as well who glorifies himself in the compliments and congees that are made him as if he were master of the company, when he is one of the least of the train. Archelaus, king of Macedon, walking along the street, somebody threw water on his head, which they who were with him said he ought to punish . "Aye,

¹ In the edition of Bordeaux, Montaigne adds these words "A pleasant fancy ; many things that I would not say to a particular individual, I say to the people ; and, as to my most secret thoughts, send my most intimate friends to my book "

but," said he, "whoever it was, he did not throw the water upon me, but upon him whom he took me to be."¹ Socrates being told that people spoke ill of him, "Not at all," said he, "there is nothing in me of what they say."² For my part, if any one should recommend me as a good pilot, as being very modest or very chaste, I should owe him no thanks; and so, whoever should call me traitor, robber, or drunkard, I should be as little concerned. They who do not rightly know themselves, may feed themselves with false approbations; not I, who see myself, and who examine myself even to my very bowels, and who very well know what is my due. I am content to be less commended, provided I am better known. I may be reputed a wise man in such a sort of wisdom as I take to be folly. I am vexed that my Essays only serve the ladies for a common piece of furniture, and a piece for the hall; this chapter will make me part of the water-closet. I love to traffic with them a little in private; public conversation is without favour and without savour. In farewells, we oftener than not heat our affections towards the things we take leave of, I take my last leave of the pleasures of this world: these are our last embraces.

But let us come to my subject: what has the act of generation, so natural, so necessary, and so just, done to men, to be a thing not to be spoken of without blushing, and to be excluded from all serious and moderate discourse? We boldly pronounce kill, rob, betray,³ and that we dare only to do betwixt the teeth. Is it to say, the less we expend in words, we may pay so much the more in thinking?

¹ Plutarch, *Apothegms of the Kings*.

² Diogenes Laertius, in *Vita*, ii 34

³ Cicero, *Ep. Fam.*, ix 22.

For it is certain that the words least in use, most seldom written, and best kept in, are the best and most generally known: no age, no manners, are ignorant of them, no more than the word bread: they imprint themselves in every one without being expressed, without voice, and without figure; and the sex that most practises it is bound to say least of it. 'Tis an act that we have placed in the franchise of silence, from which to take it is a crime even to accuse and judge it; neither dare we reprehend it but by periphrasis and picture. A great favour to a criminal to be so execrable that justice thinks it unjust to touch and see him; free, and safe by the benefit of the severity of his condemnation. Is it not here as in matter of books, that sell better and become more public for being suppressed? For my part, I will take Aristotle at his word, who says,¹ that "bashfulness is an ornament to youth, but a reproach to old age." These verses are preached in the ancient school, a school that I much more adhere to than the modern: its virtues appear to me to be greater, and the vices less:—

"Ceux qui par trop fuyant Venus estrivent,
Faillent autant que ceulx qui trop la suyvent."²

"Quæ quoniam, rerum naturam sola gubernas,
Nec sine te quicquam dias in luminis oras
Exoritur, neque fit lætum, nec amabile quidquam."³

I know not who could set Pallas and the Muses at variance with Venus, and make them cold

¹ *Nichom. Ethicæ*, iv. 9

² "They err as much who too much forbear Venus, as they who are too frequent in her rites"—A translation by Amyot from Plutarch, *A philosopher should converse with princes*

³ "Goddess, still thou alone governest nature, nor without thee anything comes into light, nothing is pleasant, nothing joyful"—Lucretius, i. 22.

towards Love; but I see no deities so well met, or that are more indebted to one another. Who will deprive the Muses of amorous imaginations, will rob them of the best entertainment they have, and of the noblest matter of their work, and who will make Love lose the communication and service of poesy, will disarm him of his best weapons: by this means they charge the god of familiarity and good will, and the protecting goddesses of humanity and justice, with the vice of ingratitude and unthankfulness. I have not been so long cashiered from the state and service of this god, that my memory is not still perfect in his force and value:—

“Agnosco veteris vestigia flammæ”¹;

There are yet some remains of heat and emotion after the fever.—

“Nec mihi deficiat calor hic, hiemantibus annis!”²

Withered and drooping as I am, I feel yet some remains of the past ardour.—

“Qual l'alto Egeo, per che Aquilone o Noto
Cessi, che tutto prima il volse et scosse,
Non 's acchetta ei pero, ma'l suono e'l moto
Ritien del l' onde anco agitate e grosse”³

but from what I understand of it, the force and power of this god are more lively and animated in the picture of poesy than in their own essence:—

“Et versus digitos habet”⁴

¹ “I recognise vestiges of my old flame”—*Aeneid*, iv 23

² “Nor let this heat of youth fail me in my winter years”

³ “As Ægean seas, when storms be calmed again,
That rolled their tumbling waves with troubulous blasts,
Do yet of tempests passed some show retain,
And here and there their swelling billows cast”—Fairfax

⁴ “Verse has fingers.”—Altered from Juvenal, vi 196

it has I know not what kind of air, more amorous than love itself. Venus is not so beautiful, naked, alive, and panting, as she is here in Virgil :—

“ Dixerat , et niveis hinc atque hinc Diva lacertis
 Cunctantem amplexu molli fovet. Ille repente
 Accepit solitam flamمام ; notusque medullas
 Intravit calor, et labefacta per ossa cucurrit
 Non secus atque olim tonitru, cum rupta corusco
 Ignea rima micans percurrit lumine nimbos
 . . . Ea verba loquutus,
 Optatos dedit amplexus , placidumque petivit
 Conjugis infusus gremio per membra soporem.”¹

All that I find fault with in considering it is, that he has represented her a little too passionate for a married Venus , in this discreet kind of coupling, the appetite is not usually so wanton, but more grave and dull. Love hates that people should hold of any but itself, and goes but faintly to work in familiarities derived from any other title, as marriage is : alliance, dowry, therein sway by reason, as much or more than grace and beauty. Men do not marry for themselves, let them say what they will ; they marry as much or more for their posterity and family , the custom and interest of marriage concern our race much more than us ; and therefore it is, that I like to have a match carried on by a third hand rather than a man's own, and by another man's liking than that of the party himself ; and how much is all this opposite to the conventions of love ? And also it is a kind of incest to employ in this venerable and sacred

¹ “The goddess spoke, and throwing round him her snowy arms in soft embraces, caresses him hesitating. Suddenly he caught the wonted flame, and the well-known warmth pierced his marrow, and ran thrilling through his shaken bones just as when at times, with thunder, a stream of fire in lightning flashes shoots across the skies

Having spoken these words, he gave her the wished embrace, and in the bosom of his spouse sought placid sleep”—*Aeneid*, viii 387 and 403.

alliance the heat and extravagance of amorous licence, as I think I have said elsewhere.¹ A man, says Aristotle, must approach his wife with prudence and temperance, lest in dealing too lasciviously with her, the extreme pleasure make her exceed the bounds of reason. What he says upon the account of conscience, the physicians say upon the account of health : "that a pleasure excessively lascivious, voluptuous, and frequent, makes the seed too hot, and hinders conception" : 'tis said, elsewhere, that to a languishing intercourse, as this naturally is, to supply it with a due and fruitful heat, a man must do it but seldom and at appreciable intervals :—

"*Sed rapiat sitiens Venerem, interiusque recondat*"²

I see no marriages where the conjugal compatibility sooner fails than those that we contract upon the account of beauty and amorous desires ; there should be more solid and constant foundation, and they should proceed with greater circumspection ; this furious ardour is worth nothing.

They who think they honour marriage by joining love to it, do, methinks, like those who, to favour virtue, hold that nobility is nothing else but virtue. They are indeed things that have some relation to one another, but there is a great deal of difference : we should not so mix their names and titles ; 'tis a wrong to them both so to confound them. Nobility is a brave quality, and with good reason introduced ; but forasmuch as 'tis a quality depending upon others, and may happen in a vicious person, in himself nothing, 'tis in estimate infinitely below virtue³ :

¹ Book 1, c 29

² "But let him thirstily snatch the joys of love and enclose them in his bosom" — Virg, *Georg*, iii 137.

³ "If nobility be virtue, it loses its quality in all things wherein not virtuous and if it be not virtue, 'tis a small matter" — *La Bruyère*.

'tis a virtue, if it be one, that is artificial and apparent, depending upon time and fortune: various in form, according to the country; living and mortal; without birth, as the river Nile; genealogical and common; of succession and similitude; drawn by consequence, and a very weak one. Knowledge, strength, goodness, beauty, riches, and all other qualities, fall into communication and commerce, but this is consummated in itself, and of no use to the service of others. There was proposed to one of our kings the choice of two candidates for the same command, of whom one was a gentleman, the other not; he ordered that, without respect to quality, they should choose him who had the most merit; but where the worth of the competitors should appear to be entirely equal, they should have respect to birth: this was justly to give it its rank. A young man unknown, coming to Antigonus to make suit for his father's command, a valiant man lately dead: "Friend," said he,¹ "in such preferments as these, I have not so much regard to the nobility of my soldiers as to their prowess." And, indeed, it ought not to go as it did with the officers of the kings of Sparta, trumpeters, fiddlers, cooks, the children of whom always succeeded to their places, how ignorant soever, and were preferred before the most experienced in the trade. They of Calicut make of nobles a sort of superhuman persons: they are interdicted marriage and all but warlike employments: they may have of concubines their fill, and the women as many lovers, without being jealous of one another; but 'tis a capital and irremissible crime to couple with a person of meaner conditions than themselves; and they think themselves polluted, if they have but touched one in walking along; and

¹ Plutarch, *On False Modesty*, c. 10

supposing their nobility to be marvellously interested and injured in it, kill such as only approach a little too near them: insomuch that the ignoble are obliged to cry out as they walk, like the gondoliers of Venice, at the turnings of streets for fear of jostling; and the nobles command them to step aside to what part they please: by that means these avoid what they repute a perpetual ignominy, those certain death. No time, no favour of the prince, no office, or virtue, or riches, can ever prevail to make a plebeian become noble: to which this custom contributes, that marriages are interdicted betwixt different trades; the daughter of one of the cordwainers' gild is not permitted to marry a carpenter; and parents are obliged to train up their children precisely in their own callings, and not put them to any other trade; by which means the distinction and continuance of their fortunes are maintained.¹

A good marriage, if there be any such, rejects the company and conditions of love, and tries to represent those of friendship. 'Tis a sweet society of life, full of constancy, trust, and an infinite number of useful and solid services and mutual obligations; which any woman who has a right taste:—

“Optato quam junxit lumine tæda”²—

would be loth to serve her husband in quality of a mistress. If she be lodged in his affection as a wife, she is more honourably and securely placed. When he purports to be in love with another, and works all he can to obtain his desire, let any one but ask him, on which he had rather a disgrace

¹ These statements are incorrect

² “Whom the marriage torch has joined with the desired light”—Catullus, Ixix. 79.

should fall, his wife or his mistress, which of their misfortunes would most afflict him, and to which of them he wishes the most grandeur, the answer to these questions is out of dispute in a sound marriage.

And that so few are observed to be happy, is a token of its price and value. If well formed and rightly taken, 'tis the best of all human societies ; we cannot live without it, and yet we do nothing but decry it. It happens, as with cages, the birds without despair to get in, and those within despair of getting out. Socrates being asked,¹ whether it was more commodious to take a wife or not, " Let a man take which course he will," said he ; " he will repent." 'Tis a contract to which the common saying.—

" *Homo homini aut deus aut lupus,*"²

may very fitly be applied ; there must be a concurrence of many qualities in the construction. It is found nowadays more convenient for simple and plebeian souls, where delights, curiosity, and idleness do not so much disturb it ; but extravagant humours, such as mine, that hate all sorts of obligation and restraint, are not so proper for it —

" *Et mihi dulce magis resoluto vivere collo*"³

Might I have had my own will, I would not have married Wisdom herself, if she would have had me. But 'tis to much purpose to evade it ; the common custom and usance of life will have it so. The most of my actions are guided by example, not by choice, and yet I did not go to it of my own voluntary

¹ Diogenes Laertius, *in Vitâ*, ii. 33.

² " Man to man is either a god or a wolf" — Erasmus, *Adag*.

³ " And it is sweet to me to live with a loosened neck" — *Pseudo-Gallus*, i. 61.

motion ; I was led and drawn to it by extrinsic occasions ; for not only things that are incommodious in themselves, but also things however ugly, vicious, and to be avoided, may be rendered acceptable by some condition or accident ; so unsteady and vain is all human resolution¹ and I was persuaded to it, when worse prepared and less tractable than I am at present, that I have tried what it is : and as great a libertine as I am taken to be, I have in truth more strictly observed the laws of marriage, than I either promised or expected. 'Tis in vain to kick, when a man has once put on his fetters : a man must prudently manage his liberty ; but having once submitted to obligation, he must confine himself within the laws of common duty, at least, do what he can towards it. They who engage in this contract, with a design to carry themselves in it with hatred and contempt, do an unjust and inconvenient thing , and the fine rule that I hear pass from hand to hand amongst the women, as a sacred oracle .—

“Sers ton mary comme ton maistre,
Et t'en garde comme d'un traistre,”¹

which is to say, comport thyself towards him with a dissembled, inimical, and distrustful reverence (a cry of war and defiance), is equally injurious and hard. I am too mild for such rugged designs : to say the truth, I am not arrived to that perfection of ability and refinement of wit, to confound reason with injustice, and to laugh at all rule and order that does not please my palate ; because I hate superstition, I do not presently run into the contrary extreme of irreligion. If a man does not always perform his duty, he ought at least to love

¹ “Serve thy husband as thy master, but guard thyself against him as from a traitor.”

and acknowledge it ; 'tis treachery to marry without espousing.

Let us proceed.

Our poet represents a marriage happy in a good accord wherein nevertheless there is not much loyalty. Does he mean, that it is not impossible but a woman may give the reins to her own passion, and yield to the importunities of love, and yet reserve some duty toward marriage, and that it may be hurt, without being totally broken ? A serving man may cheat his master, whom nevertheless he does not hate. Beauty, opportunity, and destiny (for destiny has also a hand in't) :—

“Fatum est in partibus illis
Quas sinus abscondit, nam, si tibi sidera cessent,
Nil faciet longi mensura incognita nervi”¹,

have attached her to a stranger ; though not so wholly, peradventure, but that she may have some remains of kindness for her husband. They are two designs, that have several paths leading to them, without being confounded with one another ; a woman may yield to a man she would by no means have married, not only for the condition of his fortune, but for those also of his person. Few men have made a wife of a mistress, who have not repented it. And even in the other world, what an unhappy life does Jupiter lead with his, whom he had first enjoyed as a mistress^{1*} 'Tis, as the proverb runs, to bes foul a basket and then put it upon one's head. I have in my time, in a good family, seen love shamefully and dishonestly cured by marriage : the considerations are widely

¹ “There is a fatality about the hidden parts : let nature have endowed you however liberally, 'tis of no use, if your good star fails you in the nick of time”—Juvenal, ix. 22

* *Ihad.*, xiv. 295.

different. We love at once, without any tie, two things contrary in themselves.

Socrates was wont to say,¹ that the city of Athens pleased, as ladies do whom men court for love; every one loved to come thither to take a turn, and pass away his time; but no one liked it so well as to espouse it, that is, to inhabit there, and to make it his constant residence. I have been vexed to see husbands hate their wives only because they themselves do them wrong; we should not, at all events, methinks, love them the less for our own faults; they should at least, upon the account of repentance and compassion, be dearer to us.

They are different ends, he says, and yet in some sort compatible, marriage has utility, justice, honour, and constancy for its share; a flat, but more universal pleasure: love finds itself wholly upon pleasure, and, indeed, has it more full, lively, and sharp; a pleasure inflamed by difficulty; there must be in it sting and smart: 'tis no longer love, if without darts and fire. The bounty of ladies is too profuse in marriage, and dulls the point of affection and desire: to evade which inconvenience, do but observe what pains Lycurgus and Plato take in their laws.

Women are not to blame at all, when they refuse the rules of life that are introduced into the world, forasmuch as the men make them without their help. There is naturally contention and brawling betwixt them and us; and the strictest friendship we have with them is yet mixed with tumult and tempest. In the opinion of our author, we deal inconsiderately with them in this: after we have discovered that they are, without comparison, more

¹ *Ælian, Var. Hist., xii. 52.*

able and ardent in the practice of love than we, and that the old priest testified as much, who had been one while a man, and then a woman:—

and moreover, that we have learned from their own mouths the proof that, in several ages, was made by an Emperor and Empress of Rome,* both famous for ability in that affair! for he in one night deflowered ten Sarmatian virgins who were his captives: but[†] she had five-and-twenty bouts in one night, changing her man according to her need and liking:—

“Adhuc ardens rigidæ tentigine vulvæ
Et lassata viris, nondum satiata, recessit”[‡]

and that upon the dispute which happened in Cataluna, wherein a wife complaining of her husband's too frequent addresses to her, not so much, as I conceive, that she was incommodated by it (for I believe no miracles out of religion) as under this pretence, to curtail and curb in this, which is the fundamental act of marriage, the authority of husbands over their wives, and to shew that their frowardness and malignity go beyond the nuptial bed, and spurn under foot even the graces and sweets of Venus; the husband, a man truly brutish and unnatural, replied, that even on fasting days he could not subsist with less than ten courses: whereupon came out that notable sentence of the Queen of Arragon, by which, after mature deliberation of her council,

¹ “Both aspects of love were known to him,” i.e. Tiresias.—Ovid. *Metam.*, iii. 323.

² Proculus.

³ Messalina, wife of the Emperor Claudius.

⁴ “Ardent still, she retired, fatigued, but not satisfied.”—Juvenal, vi. 128.

this good queen, to give a rule and example to all succeeding ages of the moderation required in a just marriage, set down six times a day as a legitimate and necessary stint; surrendering and quitting a great deal of the needs and desires of her sex, that she might, she said, establish an easy, and consequently, a permanent and immutable rule. Hereupon the doctors cry out: what must the female appetite and concupiscence be, when their reason, their reformation and virtue, are taxed at such a rate, considering the divers judgments of our appetites? for Solon, master of the law school, taxes us but at three a month,¹ that men may not fail in point of conjugal frequentation: after having, I say, believed and preached all this,² we go and enjoin them continency for their particular share, and upon the last and extreme penalties.

There is no passion so hard to contend with as this, which we would have them only resist, not simply as an ordinary vice, but as an execrable abomination, worse than irreligion and parricide; whilst we, at the same time, go to't without offence or reproach. Even those amongst us who have tried the experiment have sufficiently confessed what difficulty, or rather impossibility, they have found by material remedies to subdue, weaken, and cool the body. We, on the contrary, would have them at once sound, vigorous, plump, high-fed, and chaste; that is to say, both hot and cold; for the marriage, which we tell them is to keep them from burning, is but small refreshment to them, as we order the matter. If they take one whose vigorous age is yet boiling, he will be proud to make it known elsewhere:—

¹ Plutarch on love

² The greater ardour of women.

"Sic tandem pudor; aut eamus in jus;
 Multis mentula milibus redempta,
 Non est haec tua, Basse; vendidisti"¹;

Polemon the philosopher was justly by his wife brought before the judge for sowing in a barren field the seed that was due to one that was fruitful: if, on the other hand, they take a decayed fellow, they are in a worse condition in marriage than either maids or widows. We think them well provided for, because they have a man to lie with, as the Romans concluded Clodia Læta, a vestal nun, violated, because Caligula had approached her, though it was declared he did no more but approach her: but, on the contrary, we by that increase their necessity, forasmuch as the touch and company of any man whatever rouses their desires, that in solitude would be more quiet. And to the end, 'tis likely, that they might render their chastity more meritorious by this circumstance and consideration, Boleslas and Kinge his wife, kings of Poland, vowed it by mutual consent, being in bed together, on their very wedding day, and kept their vow in spite of all matrimonial conveniences.

We train them up from their infancy to the traffic of love; their grace, dressing, knowledge, language, and whole instruction tend that way: their governesses imprint nothing in them but the idea of love, if for nothing else but by continually representing it to them, to give them a distaste for it. My daughter, the only child I have,² is now of an age that forward young women are allowed to be married at; she is of a slow, thin, and tender

¹ "Let there be some shame, or we shall go to law your vigour, bought by your wife with many thousands, is no longer yours. thou hast sold it."—Martial, xii. 90.

² Eleonore. The only son had died in his infancy

complexion, and has accordingly been brought up by her mother after a retired and particular manner, so that she but now begins to be weaned from her childish simplicity. She was reading before me in a French book where the word *fouleau*, the name of a tree very well known, occurred¹; the woman, to whose conduct she is committed, stopped her short a little roughly, and made her skip over that dangerous step. I let her alone, not to trouble their rules, for I never concern myself in that sort of government; feminine polity has a mysterious procedure; we must leave it to them; but if I am not mistaken the commerce of twenty lacquies could not, in six months' time, have so imprinted in her memory the meaning, usage, and all the consequence of the sound of these wicked syllables, as this good old woman did by reprimand and interdiction:—

“Motus doceri gaudet Ionicos
Matura virgo, et fingitur artibus,
Jam nunc et incestos amores
De tenero meditatur unguil.”²

Let them but give themselves the rein a little, let them but enter into liberty of discourse, we are but children to them in this science. Hear them but describe our pursuits and conversation, they will very well make you understand that we bring them nothing they have not known before, and digested without our help.³ Is it, perhaps, as Plato says,

¹ The beech-tree; the name resembles in sound an obscene French word. It is to be surmised that Montaigne and his daughter did not succeed in maintaining the most cordial relations. But we hear very little about her.

² “The maid ripe for marriage delights to learn Ionic dances, and to imitate those lascivious movements. Nay, already from her infancy she meditates criminal amours”—Horace, *Od.*, iii 6, 21

³ This sentence refers to a conversation between some young women in his immediate neighbourhood, which the Essayist just below informs us that he overheard, and which was too shocking for him to repeat. It must have been tolerably bad.

that they have formerly been debauched young fellows? I happened one day to be in a place where I could hear some of their talk without suspicion; I am sorry I cannot repeat it. By'r lady, said I, we had need go study the phrases of *Amadis*, and the tales of Boccaccio and Aretin, to be able to discourse with them. we employ our time to much purpose indeed. There is neither word, example, nor step they are not more perfect in than our books; 'tis a discipline that springs with their blood:—

“Et mentem ipsa Venus dedit,”¹

which these good instructors, nature, youth, and health, are continually inspiring them with; they need not learn, they breed it:—

“Nec tantum niveo gavisa est ulla columbo,
Compar, vel si quid dicitur improbus,
Oscula mordenti semper decerpere rostro,
Quantum præcipue multivola est mulier.”²

So that if the natural violence of their desire were not a little restrained by fear and honour, which were wisely contrived for them, we should be all shamed. All the motions in the world resolve into and tend to this conjunction; 'tis a matter infused throughout: 'tis a centre to which all things are directed. We yet see the edicts of the old and wise Rome made for the service of love, and the precepts of Socrates for the instruction of courtezans.—

“Quid? quod libelli Stoici inter sericos
Jacere pulvilos amant”³

¹ “Venus herself made them what they are.”—Virg, *Georg.*, iii 267.

² “No milk-white dove, or if there be a thing more lascivious, takes so much delight in kissing as woman, wishful for every man she sees.”—Catullus, lxvi 125.

³ Horace, *Epd.*, viii. 15.

Zeno, amongst his laws, also regulated the motions to be observed in getting a maidenhead. What was the philosopher Strato's book Of Carnal Conjunction?¹ And what did Theophrastus treat of in those he intituled, the one The Lover, and the other Of Love?² Of what Aristippus in his Of Former Delights? What do the so long and lively descriptions in Plato of the loves of his time pretend to? and the book called The Lover, of Demetrius Phalereus?³ and Clinias, or the Ravished Lover, of Heraclides⁴; and that of Antisthenes, Of Getting Children, or, Of Weddings,⁵ and the other, Of the Master or the Lover? And that of Aristo: Of Amorous Exercises?⁶ What those of Cleanthes: one, Of Love, the other, Of the Art of Loving?⁷ The amorous dialogues of Sphæreus?⁸ and the fable of Jupiter and Juno, of Chrysippus, impudent beyond all toleration?⁹ And his fifty so lascivious epistles? I will let alone the writings of the philosophers of the Epicurean sect, protectress of voluptuousness. Fifty deities were, in time past, assigned to this office; and there have been nations¹⁰ where, to assuage the lust of those who came to their devotion, they kept men and women in their temples for the worshippers to lie with, and it was an act of ceremony to do this before they went to prayers:—

“Nimirum propter continentiam incontinentia necessaria est, incendium ignibus extinguitur”¹¹

¹ Diogenes Laertius, v. 59.

² Idem, v. 43.

³ Idem, v. 81.

⁴ Idem, 87.

⁵ Idem, vi. 15.

⁶ Idem, vii. 163.

⁷ Idem, vii. 175.

⁸ Idem, 178.

⁹ Idem, 187.

¹⁰ Babylon, Cyprus, Heliopolis in Phœnicia.

¹¹ “Forsooth incontinency is necessary for continency's sake, a conflagration is extinguished by fire.”

In the greatest part of the world, that member of our body was deified; in the same province, some flayed off the skin to offer and consecrate a piece; others offered and consecrated their seed. In another, the young men publicly cut through betwixt the skin and the flesh of that part in several places, and thrust pieces of wood into the openings as long and thick as they would receive, and of these pieces of wood afterwards made a fire as an offering to their gods; and were reputed neither vigorous nor chaste, if by the force of that cruel pain they seemed to be at all dismayed. Elsewhere the most sacred magistrate was reverenced and acknowledged by that member: and in several ceremonies the effigy of it was carried in pomp to the honour of various divinities. The Egyptian ladies, in their Bacchanalia, each carried one finely-carved of wood about their necks, as large and heavy as she could so carry it; besides which, the statue of their god presented one, which in greatness surpassed all the rest of his body.¹ The married women, near the place where I live, make of their kerchiefs the figure of one upon their foreheads, to glorify themselves in the enjoyment they have of it; and coming to be widows, they throw it behind, and cover it with their headcloths. The most modest matrons of Rome thought it an honour to offer flowers and garlands to the god Priapus; and they made the virgins, at the time of their espousals, sit upon his shameful parts. And I know not whether I have not in my time seen some air of like devotion. What was the meaning of that ridiculous piece of the *chaussure* of our forefathers, and that is still worn by our Swiss? To what end do we make a show of our

¹ Herodotus, II. 48, says "nearly as large as the body itself."

implements in figure under our breeches, and often, which is worse, above their natural size, by falsehood and imposture? I have half a mind to believe that this sort of vestment was invented in the better and more conscientious ages, that the world might not be deceived, and that every one should give a public account of his proportions: the simple nations wear them yet, and near about the real size. In those days, the tailor took measure of it, as the shoemaker does now of a man's foot. That good man, who, when I was young, gelded so many noble and ancient statues in his great city, that they might not corrupt the sight of the ladies, according to the advice of this other ancient worthy:—

“Flagiti principium est, nudare inter cives corpora,”¹

should have called to mind, that, as in the mysteries of the Bona Dea, all masculine appearance was excluded, he did nothing, if he did not geld horses and asses—in short, all nature:—

“Omne adeo genus in ernes, hominumque, ferarumque,
Et genus aquorum, pecudes, pictaeque volucres,
In furias ignemque ruunt.”²

The gods, says Plato,³ have given us one disobedient and unruly member that, like a furious animal, attempts, by the violence of its appetite, to subject all things to it; and so they have given to women one like a greedy and ravenous animal, which, if it be refused food in season, grows wild, impatient of delay, and infusing its rage into their

¹ “Tis the beginning of wickedness to expose their persons among the citizens”—Ennius, ap Cicero, *Tusc Quæs*, iv 33

² “So that all living things, men and animals, wild or tame, and fish and gaudy fowl, rush to this flame of love”—Virgil, *Georg*, iii. 244.

³ In the *Timæus*, toward the end.

bodies, stops the passages, and hinders respiration, causing a thousand ills, till, having imbibed the fruit of the common thirst, it has plentifully bedewed the bottom of their matrix. Now my legislator¹ should also have considered that, peradventure, it were a chaster and more fruitful usage to let them know the fact as it is betimes, than permit them to guess according to the liberty and heat of their own fancy; instead of the real parts they substitute, through hope and desire, others that are three times more extravagant; and a certain friend of mine lost himself by producing his in place and time when the opportunity was not present to put them to their more serious use. What mischief do not those pictures of prodigious dimension do that the boys make upon the staircases and galleries of the royal houses? they give the ladies a cruel contempt of our natural furniture. And what do we know but that Plato, after other well-instituted republics, ordered that the men and women, old and young, should expose themselves naked to the view of one another, in his gymnastic exercises, upon that very account? The Indian women who see the men in their natural state, have at least cooled the sense of seeing. And let the women of the kingdom of Pegu say what they will, who below the waist have nothing to cover them but a cloth slit before, and so strait, that what decency and modesty soever they pretend by it, at every step all is to be seen, that it is an invention to allure the men to them, and to divert them from boys, to whom that nation is generally inclined; yet, peradventure they lose more by it than they get, and one may venture to say, that an entire appetite

¹ The Pope who, as Montaigne has told us, took it into his head to geld the statues.

is more sharp than one already half-glutted by the eyes. Livia was wont to say, that to a virtuous woman a naked man was but a statue.¹ The Lacedæmonian women, more virgins when wives than our daughters are, saw every day the young men of their city stripped naked in their exercises, themselves little heeding to cover their thighs in walking, believing themselves, says Plato, sufficiently covered by their virtue without any other robe. But those, of whom St. Augustin² speaks, have given nudity a wonderful power of temptation, who have made it a doubt, whether women at the day of judgment shall rise again in their own sex, and not rather in ours, for fear of tempting us again in that holy state. In brief, we allure and flesh them by all sorts of ways: we incessantly heat and stir up their imagination, and then we find fault.³ Let us confess the truth, there is scarce one of us who does not more apprehend the shame that accrues to him by the vices of his wife than by his own, and that is not more solicitous (a wonderful charity) of the conscience of his virtuous wife than of his own; who had not rather commit theft and sacrilege, and that his wife was a murderer and a heretic, than that she should not be more chaste than her husband: an unjust estimate of vices. Both we and they are capable of a thousand corruptions more prejudicial and unnatural than lust: but we weigh vices, not according to nature, but according to our interest; by which means they take so many unequal forms.

The austerity of our decrees renders the application of women to this vice more violent and vicious

¹ Dion, *Life of Tiberius*.

² *De Civit. Dei*, xxii. 17.

³ Montaigne's expression is: "et puis nous crions au ventre"

than its own condition needs, and engages it in consequences worse than their cause: they will readily offer to go to the law courts to seek for gain, and to the wars to get reputation, rather than in the midst of ease and delights, to have to keep so difficult a guard. Do not they very well see that there is neither merchant nor soldier who will not leave his business to run after this sport, or the porter or cobbler, toiled and tired out as they are with labour and hunger?—

“ Num tu, quæ tenuit dives Achæmenes,
 Aut pinguis Phrygiæ Mygdonias opes,
 Permutare velis crine Lycymniæ?
 Plenas aut Arabum domos,
 Dum fragrantia detorquet ad oscula
 Cervicem, aut facili sævitia negat,
 Quæ poscente magis gaudeat eripi,
 Interdum rapere occupet? ”¹

I do not know whether the exploits of Alexander and Cæsar really surpass the resolution of a beautiful young woman, bred up after our fashion, in the light and commerce of the world, assailed by so many contrary examples, and yet keeping herself entire in the midst of a thousand continual and powerful solicitations. There is no doing more difficult than that not doing, nor more active: I hold it more easy to carry a suit of armour all the days of one's life than a maidenhead, and the vow of virginity of all others is the most noble, as being the hardest to keep:—

“ Diaboli virtus in lumbis est,”

¹ “Wouldst thou not exchange all that the wealthy Achæmenes had, or the Mygdonian riches of fertile Phrygia, for one ringlet of Lycymnia's hair? or the treasures of the Arabians, when she turns her head to you for fragrant kisses, or with easily assuaged anger denies them, which she would rather by far you took by force, and sometimes herself snatches one!”—Horace, *Od*, ii. 12, 21.

says St. Jerome.¹ We have, doubtless, resigned to the ladies the most difficult and most vigorous of all human endeavours, and let us resign to them the glory too. This ought to encourage them to be obstinate in it ; 'tis a brave thing for them to defy us, and to spurn under foot that vain pre-eminence of valour and virtue that we pretend to have over them ; they will find if they do but observe it, that they will not only be much more esteemed for it, but also much more beloved. A gallant man does not give over his pursuit for being refused, provided it be a refusal of chastity, and not of choice ; we may swear, threaten, and complain to much purpose ; we therein do but lie, for we love them all the better : there is no allurement like modesty, if it be not rude and crabbed. 'Tis stupidity and meanness to be obstinate against hatred and disdain, but against a virtuous and constant resolution, mixed with goodwill, 'tis the exercise of a noble and generous soul. They may acknowledge our service to a certain degree, and give us civilly to understand that they disdain us not ; for the law that enjoins them to abominate us because we adore them, and to hate us because we love them, is certainly very cruel, if but for the difficulty of it. Why should they not give ear to our offers and requests, so long as they are kept within the bounds of modesty ? wherefore should we fancy them to have other thoughts within, and to be worse than they seem ? A queen of our time said with spirit, "that to refuse these courtesies is a testimony of weakness in women and a self-accusation of facility, and that a lady could not boast of her chastity who was never tempted."

¹ St Jerome, *contra Jovinian*, ii 72, Ed 1537. Montaigne thus translates the passage on the margin of a copy of his essays. "Car la vertu du diable est aux rognons"

The limits of honour are not cut so short; they may give themselves a little rein, and relax a little without being faulty: there lies on the frontier some space free, indifferent, and neuter. He that has beaten and pursued her into her fort is a strange fellow if he be not satisfied with his fortune: the price of the conquest is considered by the difficulty. Would you know what impression your service and merit have made in her heart? Judge of it by her behaviour. Such an one may grant more, who does not grant so much. The obligation of a benefit wholly relates to the good will of those who confer it: the other coincident circumstances are dumb, dead, and casual, it costs her dearer to grant you that little, than it would do her companion to grant all. If in anything rarity give estimation, it ought especially in this: do not consider how little it is that is given, but how few have it to give; the value of money alters according to the coinage and stamp of the place. Whatever the spite and indiscretion of some may make them say in the excess of their discontent, virtue and truth will in time recover all the advantage. I have known some whose reputation has for a great while suffered under slander, who have afterwards been restored to the world's universal approbation by their mere constancy without care or artifice; every one repents, and gives himself the lie for what he has believed and said; and from girls a little suspected they have been afterward advanced to the first rank amongst the ladies of honour. Somebody told Plato that all the world spoke ill of him. "Let them talk," said he; "I will live so as to make them change their note." Besides the fear of God, and the value of so rare a glory, which ought to make them look

to themselves, the corruption of the age we live in compels them to it; and if I were they, there is nothing I would not rather do than intrust my reputation in so dangerous hands. In my time the pleasure of telling (a pleasure little inferior to that of doing) was not permitted but to those who had some faithful and only friend; but now the ordinary discourse and common table-talk is nothing but boasts of favours received and the secret liberality of ladies. In earnest, 'tis too abject, too much meanness of spirit, in men to suffer such ungrateful, indiscreet, and giddy-headed people so to persecute, forage, and rifle those tender and charming favours.

This our immoderate and illegitimate exasperation against this vice springs from the most vain and turbulent disease that afflicts human minds, which is jealousy:—

“Quis vetat apposito lumen de lumine sumi?
Dent licet assidue, nil tamen inde pent”¹,

she, and envy, her sister, seem to me to be the most foolish of the whole troop. As to the last, I can say little about it, 'tis a passion that, though said to be so mighty and powerful, had never to do with me. As to the other, I know it by sight, and that's all. Beasts feel it; the shepherd Cratis, having fallen in love with a she-goat, the he-goat, out of jealousy, came, as he lay asleep, to butt the head of the female, and crushed it.² We have raised this fever to a greater excess by the examples of some barbarous nations; the best disciplined

¹ “Who says that one light should not be lighted from another light? Let them give ever so much, as much ever remains to lose.”—Ovid, *De Arte Amandi*, iii. 93. The measure of the last line is not good; but the words are taken from the epigram in the Catalecta entitled *Priapus*.

² Aelian, *On Animals*, xii. 42.

have been touched with it, and 'tis reason, but not transported :—

“Ense maritali nemo confossum adulter
Purpureo Stygiis sanguine tinxit aquas.”¹

Lucullus, Cæsar, Pompey, Antony, Cato, and other brave men were cuckolds, and knew it, without making any bustle about it ; there was in those days but one coxcomb, Lepidus,² that died for grief that his wife had used him so :—

“Ah ! tunc te miserum malique fati,
Quem attractis pedibus, patente portâ,
Percurrent raphanique mugilesque”³

and the god of our poet, when he surprised one of his companions with his wife, satisfied himself by putting them to shame only :—

“Atque aliquis de dis non tristibus optat
Sic fieri turpis”⁴

and nevertheless took anger at the lukewarm embraces she gave him, complaining that upon that account she was grown jealous of his affection :—

“Quid causas petis ex alto ? fiducia cessit
Quo tibi, diva, mei ?”⁵

lo ! she entreats arms for her bastard :—

“Arma rogo genitrix nato,”⁶

¹ “Never did adulterer slain by a husband stain with purple blood the Stygian waters”

² “The father of the Triumvir”—Plutarch, *Life of Pompey*, c. 5.

³ “Wretched man ! when, taken in the fact, thou wilt be dragged out of doors by the heels, and suffer the punishment of thy adultery.”—Catullus, xv 17.

⁴ “And one of the merry gods wishes that he should himself like to be so disgraced”—Ovid, *Metam.*, iv 187.

⁵ “Dost thou seek causes from above ? Why, goddess, has your confidence in me ceased ?”—Virgil, *Aeneid*, viii 395.

⁶ “I, a mother, ask armour for a son”—Idem, *ibid.*, 383.

which are freely granted; and Vulcan speaks honourably of *Æneas*:-

“Arma acri facienda viro,”¹

with, in truth, a more than human humanity. And I am willing to leave this excess of kindness to the gods:-

“Atque nec divis homines componier æquum est.”²

As to the confusion of children, besides that the gravest legislators ordain and affect it in their republics, it touches not the women, where this passion is, I know not how, much better seated:-

“Sæpe etiam Juno, maxima cœlicolūm,
Conjugis in culpa flagravit quotidianā”³

When jealousy seizes these poor souls, weak and incapable of resistance, 'tis pity to see how miserably it torments and tyrannises over them, it insinuates itself into them under the title of friendship, but after it has once possessed them, the same causes that served for a foundation of good-will serve them for a foundation of mortal hatred. 'Tis, of all the diseases of the mind, that which the most things serve for aliment and the fewest for remedy: the virtue, health, merit, reputation of the husband are incendiaries of their fury and ill-will:-

“Nullæ sunt inimicitiae, nisi amoris, acerbæ”⁴

This fever defaces and corrupts all they have of beautiful and good besides; and there is no action of a jealous woman, let her be how chaste and how good a housewife soever, that does not relish of

¹ “Arms are to be made for a valiant hero”—Virgil, *Æneid*, viii. 441.

² “Nor is it fit to compare men with gods”—Catullus, lxviii. 141.

³ “Often was Juno, greatest of the heaven-dwellers, enraged by her husband's daily infidelities”—Idem, *ibid*.

⁴ “No enmities are bitter, save that of love”—Propertius, ii. 8, 3.

anger and wrangling ; 'tis a furious agitation, that rebounds them to an extremity quite contrary to its cause. This held good with one Octavius at Rome. Having lain with Pontia Posthumia, he augmented love with fruition, and solicited with all importunity to marry her : unable to persuade her, this excessive affection precipitated him to the effects of the most cruel and mortal hatred : he killed her¹. In like manner, the ordinary symptoms of this other amorous disease are intestine hatreds, private conspiracies, and cabals :—

“Notumque furens quid fæmina possit,”²

and a rage which so much the more frets itself, as it is compelled to excuse itself by a pretence of good-will.

Now, the duty of chastity is of a vast extent ; is it the will that we would have them restrain ? This is a very supple and active thing ; a thing very nimble, to be stayed. How ? if dreams sometimes engage them so far that they cannot deny them : it is not in them, nor, peradventure, in chastity itself, seeing that is a female, to defend itself from lust and desire. If we are only to trust to their will, what a case are we in, then ? Do but imagine what crowding there would be amongst men in pursuance of the privilege to run full speed, without tongue or eyes, into every woman's arms who would accept them. The Scythian women put out the eyes of all their slaves and prisoners of war, that they might have their pleasure of them, and they never the wiser³. O, the furious advantage of

¹ Tacitus, *Annal*, xiii. 44 Octavius Sagitta, a tribune, A D 53

² “And it is known what an angry woman is capable of doing.”—*Aeneid*, v. 21.

³ Herodotus, iv. 2, says that the Scythians put out the eyes of their slaves engaged in drawing milk from the mares, which was their sustenance—not a very obvious reason. Montaigne's version of the matter is more comprehensible.

opportunity! Should any one ask me, what was the first thing to be considered in love matters, I should answer that it was how to take a fitting time; and so the second; and so the third—'tis a point that can do everything. I have sometimes wanted fortune, but I have also sometimes been wanting to myself in matters of attempt. God help him, who yet makes light of this! There is greater temerity required in this age of ours, which our young men excuse under the name of heat; but should women examine it more strictly, they would find that it rather proceeds from contempt. I was always superstitiously afraid of giving offence, and have ever had a great respect for her I loved: besides, he who in this traffic takes away the reverence, defaces at the same time the lustre. I would in this affair have a man a little play the child, the timorous, and the servant. If not altogether in this, I have in other things some air of the foolish bashfulness whereof Plutarch makes mention; and the course of my life has been divers ways hurt and blemished with it; a quality very ill suiting my universal form: and, indeed, what are we but sedition and discrepancy? I am as much out of countenance to be denied as I am to deny; and it so much troubles me to be troublesome to others that on occasion when duty compels me to try the good-will of any one in a thing that is doubtful and that will be chargeable to him, I do it very faintly, and very much against my will: but if it be for my own particular (whatever Homer truly says,¹ that modesty is a foolish virtue in an indigent person), I commonly commit it to a third person to blush for me, and deny those who employ me with the same difficulty: so that it has sometimes befallen me to

¹ *Odyssey*, xvii. 347.

have had a mind to deny, when I had not the power to do it.

'Tis folly, then, to attempt to bridle in women a desire that is so powerful in them, and so natural to them. And when I hear them brag of having so maidenly and so temperate a will, I laugh at them: they retire too far back. If it be an old toothless trot, or a young dry consumptive thing, though it be not altogether to be believed, at least they say it with more similitude of truth. But they who still move and breathe, talk at that ridiculous rate to their own prejudice, by reason that inconsiderate excuses are a kind of self-accusation, like a gentleman, a neighbour of mine, suspected to be insufficient —

"Languidior tenera cui pendens sicula beta,
Numquam se medium sustulit ad tunicam,"¹

who three or four days after he was married, to justify himself, went about boldly swearing that he had ridden twenty stages the night before: an oath that was afterwards made use of to convict him of his ignorance in that affair, and to divorce him from his wife. Besides, it signifies nothing, for there is neither continency nor virtue where there are no opposing desires. It is true, they may say, but we will not yield; saints themselves speak after that manner. I mean those who boast in good gravity of their coldness and insensibility, and who expect to be believed with a serious countenance; for when 'tis spoken with an affected look, when their eyes give the lie to their tongue, and when they talk in the cant of their profession, which always goes against the hair, 'tis good sport. I am a great servant of liberty and plainness; but there is no remedy; if it be not wholly simple or childish, 'tis

¹ Catullus, lxvii. 21: The sense is in the context.

silly, and unbecoming ladies in this commerce, and presently runs into impudence. Their disguises and figures only serve to cosen fools ; lying is there in its seat of honour ; 'tis a by-way, that by a back-door leads us to truth. If we cannot curb their imagination, what would we have from them. Effects ? There are enough of them that evade all foreign communication, by which chastity may be corrupted :—

“ Illud s^{ae}pe facit, quod sine teste facit ”¹ ;

and those which we fear the least are, peradventure, most to be feared ; their sins that make the least noise are the worst .—

“ Offendor m^{ae}chā simpliciore mⁱⁿus ”²

There are ways by which they may lose their virginity without prostitution, and, which is more, without their knowledge :—

“ Obsterix, virginis cujusdam integratam manu velut explorans, sive malevolentia, sive inscita, sive casu, dum inspicit, perdidit ”³

Such a one, by seeking her maidenhead, has lost it, another by playing with it has destroyed it. We cannot precisely circumscribe the actions, we interdict them ; they must guess at our meaning under general and doubtful terms ; the very idea we invent for their chastity is ridiculous : for, amongst the greatest patterns that I have is Fatua, the wife of Faunus : who never, after her marriage, suffered herself to be seen by any man whatever⁴, and the

¹ “ He often does that which he does without a witness ”—Martial, vii 62, 6.

² “ I am less offended with a more absolute strumpet.”—Idem, vi. 7, 6.

³ “ By malevolence, or unskillfulness, or accident, the midwife, seeking with the hand to test some maiden’s virginity, has sometimes destroyed it ”—St. Augustine, *De Civit. Dei*, i. 18.

⁴ Varro, ap Lactantius, i. 22

wife of Hiero,¹ who never perceived her husband's stinking breath, imagining that it was common to all men. They must become insensible and invisible to satisfy us.

Now let us confess that the knot of this judgment of duty principally lies in the will ; there have been husbands who have suffered cuckoldom, not only without reproach or taking offence at their wives, but with singular obligation to them and great commendation of their virtue. Such a woman has been, who prized her honour above her life, and yet has prostituted it to the furious lust of a mortal enemy, to save her husband's life, and who, in so doing, did that for him she would not have done for herself¹ This is not the place wherein we are to multiply these examples ; they are too high and rich to be set off with so poor a foil as I can give them here ; let us reserve them for a nobler place ; but for examples of ordinary lustre, do we not every day see women amongst us who surrender themselves for their husbands' sole benefit, and by their express order and mediation² and, of old, Phaulius the Argian, who offered his to King Philip out of ambition³ ; as Galba³ did it out of civility, who, having entertained Mæcenas at supper, and observing that his wife and he began to cast glances at one another and to make eyes and signs, let himself sink down upon his cushion, like one in a profound sleep, to give opportunity to their desires : which he handsomely confessed, for thereupon a servant having made bold to lay hands on the plate upon the table, he frankly cried, "What, you rogue ? do you not see that I only sleep for Mæcenas ?"

¹ Plutarch, *Apothegms of the Ancient Kings*, article *Hiero*

² Plutarch, *On Love*, c 16 Phayllus or Phaullos was a Phocian.

³ Idem, *ibid.*

Such there may be, whose manners may be lewd enough, whose will may be more reformed than another, who outwardly carries herself after a more regular manner. As we see some who complain of having vowed chastity before they knew what they did; and I have also known others really complain of having been given up to debauchery before they were of the years of discretion. The vice of the parents or the impulse of nature, which is a rough counsellor, may be the cause.

In the East Indies,¹ though chastity is of singular reputation, yet custom permitted a married woman to prostitute herself to any one who presented her with an elephant, and that with glory, to have been valued at so high a rate. Phædo the philosopher, a man of birth, after the taking of his country Elis, made it his trade to prostitute the beauty of his youth, so long as it lasted, to any one that would, for money thereby to gain his living² and Solon was the first in Greece, 'tis said, who by his laws gave liberty to women, at the expense of their chastity, to provide for the necessities of life; a custom that Herodotus says had been received in many governments before his time. And besides, what fruit is there of this painful solicitude?³ For what justice soever there is in this passion, we are yet to consider whether it turns to account or no · does any one think to curb them, with all his industry?—

“Pone seram, cohibe sed quis custodiet ipsos
Custodes? cauta est, et ab illis incipit uxor”⁴

¹ Arrian, *Hist Indic*, c 17

² Diogenes Laertius, ii 105, but he tells us that Phædo, being a slave, was violated by his master.

³ *i.e.* jealousy

⁴ “Put on a lock, shut them up under a guard, but who shall guard the guard? she is wary, and begins with them.”—Juvenal, vi 346.

What commodity will not serve their turn, in so knowing an age?

Curiosity is vicious throughout; but 'tis pernicious here. 'Tis folly to examine into a disease for which there is no physic that does not inflame and make it worse, of which the shame grows still greater and more public by jealousy, and of which the revenge more wounds our children than it heals us. You wither and die in the search of so obscure a proof. How miserably have they of my time arrived at that knowledge who have been so unhappy as to have found it out? If the informer does not at the same time apply a remedy and bring relief, 'tis an injurious information, and that better deserves a stab than the lie. We no less laugh at him who takes pains to prevent it, than at him who is a cuckold and knows it not. The character of cuckold is indelible: who once has it carries it to his grave; the punishment proclaims it more than the fault. It is to much purpose to drag out of obscurity and doubt our private misfortunes, thence to expose them on tragic scaffolds, and misfortunes that only hurt us by being known; for we say a good wife or a happy marriage, not that they are really so, but because no one says to the contrary. Men should be so discreet as to evade this tormenting and unprofitable knowledge: and the Romans had a custom, when returning from any expedition, to send home before to acquaint their wives with their coming, that they might not surprise them¹; and to this purpose it is that a certain nation has introduced a custom, that the priest shall on the wedding-day open the way to the bride, to free the husband from the doubt and curiosity of examining in the first assault, whether

¹ Plutarch, *Questions on Roman Affairs*, c. 9

she comes a virgin to his bed, or damaged by a strange amour.

But the world talks about it. I know a hundred honest men cuckolds, honestly and not unbeseemingly; a worthy man is pitied, not disesteemed for it. Order it so that your virtue may conquer your misfortune; that good men may curse the occasion, and that he who wrongs you may tremble but to think on't. And, moreover, who escapes being talked of at the same rate, from the least even to the greatest?—

“Qui melior quam tu multis fuit, improbe, rebus.”¹

Seest thou how many honest men are reproached with this in thy presence; believe that thou art no more spared elsewhere. But, the very ladies will be laughing too; and what are they so apt to laugh at in this virtuous age of ours as at a peaceable and well-composed marriage? Each amongst you has made somebody cuckold; and nature runs much in parallel, in compensation, and turn for turn. The frequency of this accident ought long since to have made it more easy; 'tis now passed into custom.

Miserable passion! which has this also, that it is incommunicable:—

“Fors etiam nostris invidit questibus aures”²,

for to what friend dare you intrust your griefs, who, if he does not laugh at them, will not make use of the occasion to get a share of the quarry? The sharps, as well as the sweets of marriage, are kept secret by the wise; and amongst its other

¹ “Who was a man better than thee, base one, in many things”—Lucretius, iii 1038 Montaigne has misquoted this passage

² “Fortune also refuses ear to our complaints.”—Catullus, lxvii 170

troublesome conditions this to a prating fellow, as I am, is one of the chief, that custom has rendered it indecent and prejudicial to communicate to any one all that a man knows and all that a man feels.

To give women the same counsel against jealousy would be so much time lost ; their very being is so made up of suspicion, vanity, and curiosity, that to cure them by any legitimate way is not to be hoped. They often recover of this infirmity by a form of health much more to be feared than the disease itself ; for as there are enchantments that cannot take away the evil but by throwing it upon another, they also willingly transfer this ever to their husbands, when they shake it off themselves. And yet I know not, to speak truth, whether a man can suffer worse from them than their jealousy ; 'tis the most dangerous of all their conditions, as the head is of all their members. Pittacus used to say,¹ that every one had his trouble, and that his was the jealous head of his wife ; but for which he should think himself perfectly happy. A mighty inconvenience, sure, which could poison the whole life of so just, so wise, and so valiant a man ; what must we other little fellows do ? The senate of Marseilles had reason to grant him his request who begged leave to kill himself that he might be delivered from the clamour of his wife ; for 'tis a mischief that is never removed but by removing the whole piece ; and that has no remedy but flight or patience, though both of them very hard. He was, methinks, an understanding fellow who said, 'twas a happy marriage betwixt a blind wife and a deaf husband.

Let us also consider whether the great and

¹ Plutarch, *On Contentiment*, c. 11.

violent severity of obligation we enjoin them does not produce two effects contrary to our design: namely, whether it does not render the pursuants more eager to attack, and the women more easy to yield. For as to the first, by raising the value of the place, we raise the value and the desire of the conquest. Might it not be Venus herself, who so cunningly enhanced the price of her merchandise, by making the laws her bawds; knowing how insipid a delight it would be that was not heightened by fancy and hardness to achieve? In short, 'tis all swine's flesh, varied by sauces, as Flaminus' host said.¹ Cupid is a roguish god, who makes it his sport to contend with devotion and justice: 'tis his glory that his power mates all powers, and that all other rules give place to his:—

“*Materiam culpæ prosequiturque suæ*”²

As to the second point; should we not be less cuckolds, if we less feared to be so? according to the humour of women whom interdiction incites, and who are more eager, being forbidden:—

“*Ubi velis, nolunt; ubi nolis, volunt ultro,
Concessâ pudet ire viâ.*”³

What better interpretation can we make of Messalina's behaviour? She, at first, made her husband a cuckold in private, as is the common use; but, bringing her business about with too much ease, by reason of her husband's stupidity, she soon scorned that way, and presently fell to

¹ Livy, xxxv 49

² “And seeks out a motive for his misdeed.”—Ovid, *Trist.*, iv.

³ ⁴ “Where thou wilt, they won't; where thou wilt not, they spontaneously agree, they are ashamed to go in the permitted path”—Terence, *Eunuchus*, act iv., sc 8, v 43.

making open love, to own her lovers, and to favour and entertain them in the sight of all: she would make him know and see how she used him. This animal, not to be roused with all this, and rendering her pleasures dull and flat by his too stupid facility, by which he seemed to authorise and make them lawful; what does she? Being the wife of a living and healthful emperor, and at Rome, the theatre of the world, in the face of the sun, and with solemn ceremony, and to Silius, who had long before enjoyed her, she publicly marries herself one day that her husband was gone out of the city.¹ Does it not seem as if she was going to become chaste by her husband's negligence? or that she sought another husband who might sharpen her appetite by his jealousy, and who by watching should incite her? But the first difficulty she met with was also the last: this beast suddenly roused: these sleepy, sluggish sort of men are often the most dangerous: I have found by experience that this extreme toleration, when it comes to dissolve, produces the most severe revenge, for taking fire on a sudden, anger and fury being combined in one, discharge their utmost force at the first onset —

"Irarumque omnes effundit habenas"².

he put her to death, and with her a great number of those with whom she had intelligence, and even one of them who could not help it, and whom she had caused to be forced to her bed with scourges.³

What Virgil says of Venus and Vulcan, Lucretius had better expressed of a stolen enjoyment betwixt her and Mars:—

¹ Tacitus, *Annal.*, xi. 26.

² "He gives full reins to the fury"—*Aeneid*, xii. 499.

³ Tacitus, *Annal.*, xi. 36.

"Belli fera moenera Mavors
 Armpotens regit, in gremium qui saepe tuum se
 Rejicit, aeterno devinctus vulnere amoris :

Pascit amore avidos inhians in te, Dea, visus,
 Eque tuo pendet resupini spiritus ore
 Hunc tu, Diva, tuo recubantem corpore sancto
 Circumfusa super, suaveis ex ore loquelas
 Funde."¹

When I ruminate on this *rejicit*, *pascit*, *inhians*, *molli*, *fovet*, *medullas*, *labefacta*, *pendet*, *percurrit*, and that noble *circumfusa*, mother of the pretty *infusus*; I disdain those little quibbles and verbal allusions that have since sprung up. Those worthy people stood in need of no subtlety to disguise their meaning; their language is downright, and full of natural and continued vigour, they are all epigram; not only the tail, but the head, body, and feet. There is nothing forced, nothing languishing, but everything keeps the same pace:—

"Contextus totus virilis est, non sunt circa flosculos occupati."²

'Tis not a soft eloquence, and without offence only; 'tis nervous and solid, that does not so much please, as it fills and ravishes the greatest minds. When I see these brave forms of expression, so lively, so profound, I do not say that 'tis well said, but well thought. 'Tis the sprightliness of the imagination that swells and elevates the words:—

"Pectus est quod disertum facit."³

¹ "Mars, the god of wars, who controls the cruel tasks of war, often reclines on thy bosom, and greedily drinks love at both his eyes, vanquished by the eternal wound of love and his breath, as he reclines, hangs on thy lips; bending thy head over him as he lies upon thy sacred person, pour forth sweet and persuasive words"—Lucretius, I. 32.

² "The whole contexture is manly; they don't occupy themselves with little flowers of rhetoric."—Seneca, *Ep.*, 33.

³ "The heart makes the man eloquent."—Quintilian, x. 7.

Our people call language, judgment, and fine words, full conceptions. This painting is not so much carried on by dexterity of hand as by having the object more vividly imprinted in the soul. Gallus speaks simply because he conceives simply: Horace does not content himself with a superficial expression; that would betray him; he sees farther and more clearly into things; his mind breaks into and rummages all the magazine of words and figures wherewith to express himself, and he must have them more than ordinary, because his conception is so. Plutarch says¹ that he sees the Latin tongue by the things. 'tis here the same: the sense illuminates and produces the words, no more words of air, but of flesh and bone; they signify more than they say. Moreover, those who are not well skilled in a language present some image of this; for in Italy I said whatever I had a mind to in common discourse, but in more serious talk, I durst not have trusted myself with an idiom that I could not wind and turn out of its ordinary pace; I would have a power of introducing something of my own.

The handling and utterance of fine wits is that which sets off language; not so much by innovating it, as by putting it to more vigorous and various services, and by straining, bending, and adapting it to them. They do not create words, but they enrich their own, and give them weight and signification by the uses they put them to, and teach them unwonted motions, but withal ingeniously and discreetly. And how little this talent is given to all is manifest by the many French scribblers of this age: they are bold and proud enough not to follow the common road, but want of invention and discretion ruins them, there is nothing seen in their

¹ *Life of Demosthenes*, c. 1.

writings but a wretched affectation of a strange new style, with cold and absurd disguises, which, instead of elevating, depress the matter: provided they can but trick themselves out with new words, they care not what they signify; and to bring in a new word by the head and shoulders, they leave the old one, very often more sinewy and significant than the other.

There is stuff enough in our language, but there is a defect in cutting out: for there is nothing that might not be made out of our terms of hunting and war, which is a fruitful soil to borrow from; and forms of speaking, like herbs, improve and grow stronger by being transplanted. I find it sufficiently abundant, but not sufficiently pliable and vigorous; it commonly quails under a powerful conception; if you would maintain the dignity of your style, you will often perceive it to flag and languish under you, and there Latin steps in to its relief, as Greek does to others. Of some of these words I have just picked out we do not so easily discern the energy, by reason that the frequent use of them has in some sort abased their beauty, and rendered it common: as in our ordinary language there are many excellent phrases and metaphors to be met with, of which the beauty is withered by age, and the colour is sullied by too common handling; but that nothing lessens the relish to an understanding man, nor does it derogate from the glory of those ancient authors who, 'tis likely, first brought those words into that lustre.¹

The sciences treat of things too refinedly, after

¹ Compare with this passage Henri Estienne's *Précellence du Langage François* and his *Conformité du Langage François avec le Grec*, of which two works M. Leon Feugere has published an edition, with notes.

an artificial, very different from the common and natural, way. My page makes love, and understands it; but read to him Leo Hebræus¹ and Ficinus, where they speak of love, its thoughts and actions, he understands it not. I do not find in Aristotle most of my ordinary motions; they are there covered and disguised in another robe for the use of the schools. Good speed them! were I of the trade, I would as much naturalise art as they artificialise nature. Let us let Bembo and Equicola alone.

When I write, I can very well spare both the company and the remembrance of books, lest they should interrupt my progress; and also, in truth, the best authors too much humble and discourage me: I am very much of the painter's mind, who, having represented cocks most wretchedly ill, charged all his boys not to suffer any natural cock to come into his shop; and had rather need to give myself a little lustre, of the invention of Antigenides the musician, who, when he was asked to sing or play, took care beforehand that the auditory should, either before or after, be satiated with some other ill musicians. But I can hardly be without Plutarch; he is so universal and so full, that upon all occasions, and what extravagant subject soever you take in hand, he will still be at your elbow, and hold out to you a liberal and not to be exhausted hand of riches and embellishments. It vexes me that he is so exposed to be the spoil of those who are conversant with him: I can scarce cast an eye upon him but I purloin either a leg or a wing.

And also for this design of mine 'tis convenient

¹ Leo the Jew, Ficinus, Cardinal Bembo, and Mario Equicola all wrote Treatises on Love.

for me to write at home, in a wild country, where I have nobody to assist or relieve me; where I hardly see a man who understands the Latin of his Paternoster, and of French a little less. I might have made it better elsewhere, but then the work would have been less my own; and its principal end and perfection is to be exactly mine. I readily correct an accidental error, of which I am full, as I run carelessly on; but for my ordinary and constant imperfections, it were a kind of treason to put them out. When another tells me, or that I say to myself, "Thou art too thick of figures: this is a word of rough Gascon: that is a dangerous phrase (I do not reject any of those that are used in the common streets of France; they who would fight custom with grammar are triflers): this is an ignorant discourse: this is a paradoxical discourse: that is going too far. thou makest thyself too merry at times: men will think thou sayest a thing in good earnest which thou only speakest in jest." "Yes, I know, but I correct the faults of inadvertence, not those of custom. Do I not talk at the same rate throughout? Do I not represent myself to the life? 'Tis enough that I have done what I designed; all the world knows me in my book, and my book in me."

Now I have an apish, imitative quality: when I used to write verses (and I never made any but Latin), they evidently discovered the poet I had last read, and some of my first essays have a little exotic taste: I speak something another kind of language at Paris than I do at Montaigne. Whoever I steadfastly look upon easily leaves some impression of his upon me; whatever I consider I usurp, whether a foolish countenance, a disagreeable look, or a ridiculous way of speaking;

and vices most of all, because they seize and stick to me, and will not leave hold without shaking. I swear more by imitation than by complexion: a murderous imitation, like that of the apes so terrible both in stature and strength, that Alexander met with in a certain country of the Indies, and which he would have had much ado any other way to have subdued; but they afforded him the means by that inclination of theirs to imitate whatever they saw done; for by that the hunters were taught to put on shoes in their sight, and to tie them fast with many knots, and to muffle up their heads in caps all composed of running nooses, and to seem to anoint their eyes with glue; so did those poor beasts employ their imitation to their own ruin. they glued up their own eyes, haltered and bound themselves. The other faculty of playing the mimic, and ingeniously acting the words and gestures of another, purposely to make people merry and to raise their admiration, is no more in me than in a stock. When I swear my own oath, 'tis only, by God¹ of all oaths the most direct. They say that Socrates swore by the dog¹; Zeno had for his oath the same interjection at this time in use amongst the Italians, *Capperi!*² Pythagoras swore By water and air.³ I am so apt, without thinking of it, to receive these superficial impressions, that if I have Majesty or Highness in my mouth three days together, they come out instead of Excellency and Lordship eight days after; and what I say to-day in sport and fooling I shall say the same to-morrow seriously. Wherefore, in writing, I more unwil-

¹ *Ælian, De Animal.*, xvii. 251.

² *Diogenes Laertius*, vii. 32.

³ *Idem*, viii. 6.

lingly undertake beaten arguments, lest I should handle them at another's expense. Every subject is equally fertile to me: a fly will serve the purpose, and 'tis well if this I have in hand has not been undertaken at the recommendation of as flighty a will. I may begin with that which pleases me best, for the subjects are all linked to one another.

But my soul displeases me, in that it ordinarily produces its deepest and most airy conceits and which please me best, when I least expect or study for them, and which suddenly vanish, having at the instant, nothing to apply them to; on horseback, at table, and in bed: but most on horseback, where I am most given to think. My speaking is a little nicely jealous of silence and attention: if I am talking my best, whoever interrupts me, stops me. In travelling, the necessity of the way will often put a stop to discourse; besides which I, for the most part, travel without company fit for regular discourses, by which means I have all the leisure I would to entertain myself. It falls out as it does in my dreams; whilst dreaming I recommend them to my memory (for I am apt to dream that I dream), but, the next morning, I may represent to myself of what complexion they were, whether gay, or sad, or strange, but what they were, as to the rest, the more I endeavour to retrieve them, the deeper I plunge them in oblivion. So of thoughts that come accidentally into my head, I have no more but a vain image remaining in my memory; only enough to make me torment myself in their quest to no purpose.

Well, then, laying books aside, and more simply and materially speaking, I find, after all, that Love is nothing else but the thirst of enjoying the object desired, or Venus any other thing than the pleasure of

discharging one's vessels, just as the pleasure nature gives in discharging other parts, that either by immoderation or indiscretion become vicious. According to Socrates,¹ love is the appetite of generation by the mediation of beauty. And when I consider the ridiculous titillation of this pleasure, the absurd, crack-brained, wild motions with which it inspires Zeno and Cratippus, the indiscreet rage, the countenance inflamed with fury and cruelty in the sweetest effects of love, and then that austere air, so grave, severe, ecstatic, in so wanton an action ; that our delights and our excrements are promiscuously shuffled together ; and that the supreme pleasure brings along with it, as in pain, fainting and complaining ; I believe it to be true, as Plato says,² that the gods made man for their sport —

“ Quænam ista jocandi
Sævitia ! ”³

and that it was in mockery that nature has ordered the most agitative of actions and the most common, to make us equal, and to put fools and wise men, beasts and us, on a level. Even the most contemplative and prudent man, when I imagine him in this posture, I hold him an impudent fellow to pretend to be prudent and contemplative ; they are the peacocks' feet that abate his pride :—

“ Ridentem dicere verum
Quid vetat ? ”⁴

They who banish serious imaginations from their sports, do, says one, like him who dares not adore the statue of a saint, if not covered with a veil.

¹ In Plato's *Banquet*

² *Laws*, i. 13, viii. 10.

³ “ What an unkindness there is in jesting ! ”—Claudian in *Eutrop*,

¹ 24

⁴ “ What prevents us from speaking truth with a smile ? ”—Horace, *Sat*, i. 1, 24.

We eat and drink, indeed, as beasts do ; but these are not actions that obstruct the functions of the soul, in these we maintain our advantage over them ; this other action subjects all other thought, and by its imperious authority makes an ass of all Plato's divinity and philosophy ; and yet there is no complaint of it. In everything else a man may keep some decorum, all other operations submit to the rules of decency ; this cannot so much as in imagination appear other than vicious or ridiculous : find out, if you can, therein any serious and discreet procedure. Alexander said,¹ that he chiefly knew himself to be mortal by this act and sleeping ; sleep suffocates and suppresses the faculties of the soul ; the familiarity with women likewise dissipates and exhausts them : doubtless 'tis a mark, not only of our original corruption, but also of our vanity and deformity.

On the one side, nature pushes us on to it, having fixed the most noble, useful, and pleasant of all her functions to this desire. and, on the other side, leaves us to accuse and avoid it, as insolent and indecent, to blush at it, and to recommend abstinence. Are we not brutes to call that work brutish which begets us ? People of so many differing religions have concurred in several proprieties, as sacrifices, lamps, burning incense, fasts, and offerings ; and amongst others, in the condemning this act : all opinions tend that way, besides the widespread custom of circumcision, which may be regarded as a punishment. We have, peradventure, reason to blame ourselves for being guilty of so foolish a production as man, and to call the act, and the parts that are employed in the act, shameful (mine, truly, are now shameful

¹ Plutarch, *How to Distinguish a Flatterer from a Friend*, c 23

and pitiful). The Essenians, of whom Pliny speaks,¹ kept up their country for several ages without either nurse or baby-clouts, by the arrival of strangers who, following this pretty humour, came continually to them: a whole nation being resolute, rather to hazard a total extermination, than to engage themselves in female embraces, and rather to lose the succession of men, than to beget one. 'Tis said,² that Zeno never had to do with a woman but once in his life, and then out of civility, that he might not seem too obstinately to disdain the sex. Every one avoids seeing a man born, every one runs to see him die; to destroy him a spacious field is sought out in the face of the sun, but, to make him, we creep into as dark and private a corner as we can: 'tis a man's duty to withdraw himself bashfully from the light to create; but 'tis glory and the fountain of many virtues to know how to destroy what we have made: the one is injury, the other favour: for Aristotle says that to do any one a kindness, in a certain phrase of his country, is to kill him. The Athenians, to couple the disgrace of these two actions, having to purge the Isle of Delos, and to justify themselves to Apollo, interdicted at once all births and burials in the precincts thereof³:—

“*Nostri nosmet paenitet.*”⁴

There are some nations that will not be seen to eat. I know a lady, and of the best quality,

¹ *Nat. Hist.*, v. 17

² Diogenes Laertius, vii. 13. What is there said, however, is that Zeno seldom had commerce with boys, lest he should be deemed a very misogynist.

³ Thucydides, iii. 104.

⁴ “We are ashamed of ourselves”—Terence, *Phormio*, l. 3, 20.

who has the same opinion, that chewing disfigures the face, and takes away much from the ladies' grace and beauty; and therefore unwillingly appears at a public table with an appetite; and I know a man also, who cannot endure to see another eat, nor himself to be seen eating, and who is more shy of company when putting in than when putting out. In the Turkish empire, there are a great number of men who, to excel others, never suffer themselves to be seen when they make their repast: who never have any more than one a week; who cut and mangle their faces and limbs; who never speak to any one: fanatic people who think to honour their nature by disnaturizing themselves; who value themselves upon their contempt of themselves, and purport to grow better by being worse. What monstrous animal is this, that is a horror to himself, to whom his delights are grievous, and who weds himself to misfortune? There are people who conceal their life:—

“*Exilioque domos et dulcia limina mutant,*”¹

and withdraw them from the sight of other men; who avoid health and cheerfulness, as dangerous and prejudicial qualities. Not only many sects, but many peoples, curse their birth, and bless their death, and there is a place where the sun is abominated and darkness adored. We are only ingenious in using ourselves ill. 'tis the real quarry our intellects fly at, and intellect, when misapplied, is a dangerous tool!—

“*O miseri! quorum gaudia crimen habent!*”²

¹ “And change for exile their homes and pleasant abodes”—*Virgil, Georg.*, ¹¹ 511

² “*O wretched men, whose pleasures are a crime!*”—*Pseudo-Gallus*, ¹ 180

Alas, poor man ! thou hast enough inconveniences that are inevitable, without increasing them by thine own invention ; and art miserable enough by nature, without being so by art ; thou hast real and essential deformities enough, without forging those that are imaginary. Dost thou think thou art too much at ease unless half thy ease is uneasy ? dost thou find that thou hast not performed all the necessary offices that nature has enjoined thee, and that she is idle in thee, if thou dost not oblige thyself to other and new offices ? Thou dost not stick to infringe her universal and undoubted laws ; but stickest to thy own special and fantastic rules, and by how much more particular, uncertain, and contradictory they are, by so much thou employest thy whole endeavour in them : the laws of thy parish occupy and bind thee : those of God and the world concern thee not. Run but a little over the examples of this kind ; thy life is full of them.

Whilst the verses of these two poets¹ treat so reservedly and discreetly of wantonness as they do, methinks they discover it much more openly. Ladies cover their necks with network, priests cover several sacred things, and painters shadow their pictures to give them greater lustre : and 'tis said that the sun and wind strike more violently by reflection than in a direct line. The Egyptian wisely answered him who asked him what he had under his cloak, " It is hid under my cloak," said he, " that thou mayest not know what it is" : but there are certain other things that people hide only to show them. Hear that one, who is more open :—

¹ Virgil and Lucretius

▪ Plutarch, *On Curiosity*, c. 3.

"Et nudum pressi corpus ad usque meum"¹:

methinks that he emasculates me. Let Martial turn up Venus as high as he may, he cannot shew her so naked: he who says all that is to be said gluts and disgusts us.² He who is afraid to express himself, draws us on to guess at more than is meant; there is treachery in this sort of modesty, and specially when they half open, as these do,³ so fair a path to imagination. Both the action and description should relish of theft.

The more respectful, more timorous, more coy, and secret love of the Spaniards and Italians pleases me. I know not who of old wished his throat as long as that of a crane, that he might the longer taste what he swallowed⁴; it had been better wished as to this quick and precipitous pleasure, especially in such natures as mine that have the fault of being too prompt. To stay its flight and delay it with preambles: all things—a glance, a bow, a word, a sign, stand for favour and recompense betwixt them. Were it not an excellent piece of thrift in him who could dine on the steam of the roast? 'Tis a passion that mixes with very little solid essence, far more vanity and feverish raving; and we should serve and pay it accordingly. Let us teach the ladies to set a better value and esteem upon themselves, to amuse and fool us: we give the last charge at the first onset, the French impetuosity will still show itself; by spinning out their favours, and exposing them in small parcels,

¹ "And pressed her naked body to mine"—Ovid, *Amor.*, 1. 5. 24

² The parallel passage in Florio is "Hear this fellow more open:—

'Et nudum pressi corpus ad usque meum'

'My body I applied even to her naked side'

Methinks he baffles me. Let Martial at his pleasure tuck-up Venus, he makes her not by much appear so wholly"

³ Virgil and Lucretius

⁴ Athenæus, 1. 6

even miserable old age itself will find some little share of reward, according to its worth and merit. He who has no fruition but in fruition, who wins nothing unless he sweeps the stakes, who takes no pleasure in the chase but in the quarry, ought not to introduce himself in our school: the more steps and degrees there are, so much higher and more honourable is the uppermost seat: we should take a pleasure in being conducted to it, as in magnificent palaces, by various porticoes and passages, long and pleasant galleries, and many windings. This disposition of things would turn to our advantage; we should there longer stay and longer love; without hope and without desire we proceed not worth a pin. Our conquest and entire possession is what they ought infinitely to dread: when they wholly surrender themselves up to the mercy of our fidelity and constancy they run a mighty hazard, they are virtues very rare and hard to be found, the ladies are no sooner ours, than we are no more theirs:—

“ Postquam cupidæ mentis satiata libido est,
Verba nihil metuere, nihil perjuria curant ”¹,

And Thrasonides,² a young man of Greece, was so in love with his passion that, having gained a mistress's consent, he refused to enjoy her, that he might not by fruition quench and stupefy the unquiet ardour of which he was so proud, and with which he so fed himself. Dearness is a good sauce to meat: do but observe how much the manner of salutation, particular to our nation, has, by its facilities, made kisses, which Socrates³ says are so powerful and dangerous for the stealing of hearts,

¹ “ When our desires are once satisfied, we care little for oaths and promises ”—Catullus, lxiv 147

² Diogenes Laertius, vii 130

³ Xenophon, *Mem. on Socrates*, l. 3, 11.

of no esteem. It is a displeasing custom and injurious for the ladies, that they must be obliged to lend their lips to every fellow who has three footmen at his heels, however ill-favoured he may be in himself:—

“Cujus livida naribus caninis
Dependet glacies, rigetque barba . . .
Centum occurrere malo culihngis”¹:

and we ourselves barely gain by it; for as the world is divided, for three beautiful women we must kiss fifty ugly ones; and to a tender stomach, like those of my age, an ill kiss overpays a good one.

In Italy they passionately court even their common women who sell themselves for money, and justify the doing so by saying, “that there are degrees of fruition, and that by such service they would procure for themselves that which is most entire; the women sell nothing but their bodies; the will is too free and too much of its own to be exposed to sale.” So that these say, ‘tis the will they undertake and they have reason. ‘Tis indeed the will that we are to serve and gain by wooing. I abhor to imagine mine, a body without affection: and this madness is, methinks, cousin-german to that of the boy who would needs pollute the beautiful statue of Venus made by Praxiteles²; or that of the furious Egyptian, who violated the dead carcase of a woman he was embalming³: which was the occasion of the law then made in Egypt, that the corpses of beautiful young women, of those of good quality, should be kept three days before they should be delivered to those whose office it was to take care for the interment⁴. Periander

¹ Martial, vii. 94
² Herodotus, ii. 89

³ Valerius Maximus, vii. 1, 11.
⁴ Idem, ibid.

did more wonderfully, who extended his conjugal affection (more regular and legitimate) to the enjoyment of his wife Melissa after she was dead.¹ Does it not seem a lunatic humour in the Moon, seeing she could no otherwise enjoy her darling Endymion, to lay him for several months asleep, and to please herself with the fruition of a boy who stirred not but in his sleep? I likewise say that we love a body without a soul or sentiment when we love a body without its consent and desire. All enjoyments are not alike: there are some that are hectic² and languishing: a thousand other causes besides good-will may procure us this favour from the ladies; this is not a sufficient testimony of affection: treachery may lurk there, as well as elsewhere: they sometimes go to't by halves:—

“*Tanquam thura merumque parent . . .
Absentem marmoreamve putes*”³:

I know some who had rather lend that than their coach, and who only impart themselves that way. You are to examine whether your company pleases them upon any other account, or, as some strong-chinned groom, for that only; in what degree of favour and esteem you are with them:—

“*Quare illud satis est, si nobis is datur unus,
Quem lapide illa diem candidiore notat.*”⁴

What if they eat your bread with the sauce of a more pleasing imagination?

¹ Diogenes Laertius, i. 96.

² “The hectic or etick fever was phthisis or consumption” Fr. *Etique*.

³ “As if they are preparing frankincense and wine . . . you might think her absent or marble.”—Martial, xi. 11, 103, 12, and 59, 8

⁴ “Wherefore that is enough, if that day alone is given us which she marks with a whiter stone.”—Catullus, lxviii. 147

"Te tenet, absentes alios suspirat amores."¹

What? have we not seen one in these days of ours who made use of this act for the purpose of a most horrid revenge, by that means to kill and poison, as he did, a worthy lady?

Such as know Italy will not think it strange if, for this subject, I seek not elsewhere for examples; for that nation may be called the regent of the world in this. They have more generally handsome and fewer ugly women than we; but for rare and excellent beauties we have as many as they. I think the same of their intellects: of those of the common sort, they have evidently far more: brutishness is immeasurably rarer there; but in individual characters of the highest form, we are nothing indebted to them. If I should carry on the comparison, I might say, as touching valour, that, on the contrary, it is, to what it is with them, common and natural with us; but sometimes we see them possessed of it to such a degree as surpasses the greatest examples we can produce. The marriages of that country are defective in this; their custom commonly imposes so rude and so slavish a law upon the women, that the most distant acquaintance with a stranger is as capital an offence as the most intimate; so that all approaches being rendered necessarily substantial, and seeing that all comes to one account, they have no hard choice to make; and when they have broken down the fence, we may safely presume they get on fire:—

"Luxuria ipsis vinculis, sicut fera bestia, irritata, deinde emissa"²

¹ "She has you in her arms, her thoughts are with other absent lovers"—Tibullus, 1 6, 35

² "Lust, like a wild beast, being more excited by being bound, breaks from his chains with greater wildness"—Livy, xxxiv. 4.

They must give them a little more rein :—

“Vidi ego nuper equum, contra sua frena tenacem,
Ore reluctanti fulminis ire modo”¹:

the desire of company is allayed by giving it a little liberty. We are pretty much in the same case : they are extreme in constraint, we in licence. 'Tis a good custom we have in France that our sons are received into the best families, there to be entertained and bred up pages, as in a school of nobility ; and 'tis looked upon as a courtesy and an affront to refuse this to a gentleman. I have taken notice (for, so many families, so many differing forms) that the ladies who have been strictest with their maids have had no better luck than those who allowed them a greater liberty. There should be moderation in these things ; one must leave a great deal of their conduct to their own discretion ; for, when all comes to all, no discipline can curb them throughout. But it is true withal that she who comes off with flying colours from a school of liberty, brings with her whereon to repose more confidence than she who comes away sound from a severe and strict school.

Our fathers dressed up their daughters' looks in bashfulness and fear (their courage and desires being the same) ; we ours in confidence and assurance ; we understand nothing of the matter ; we must leave it to the Sarmatian women, who may not lie with a man till with their own hands they have first killed another in battle.² For me, who have no other title left me to these things but by the ears, 'tis sufficient if, according to the privilege of my age, they retain me for one of their counsel.

¹ “I saw, the other day, a horse struggling against his bit, rush like a thunderbolt”—Ovid, *Amor*, iii 4, 13

² Herodotus, iv. 1, 17.

I advise them then, and us men too, to abstinence ; but if the age we live in will not endure it, at least modesty and discretion. For, as in the story of Aristippus,¹ who, speaking to some young men who blushed to see him go into a scandalous house, said : "the vice is in not coming out, not in going in," let her who has no care of her conscience have yet some regard to her reputation ; and though she be rotten within, let her carry a fair outside at least.

I commend a gradation and delay in bestowing their favours. Plato declares that, in all sorts of love, facility and promptness are forbidden to the defendant. 'Tis a sign of eagerness which they ought to disguise with all the art they have, so rashly, wholly, and hand-over-hand to surrender themselves. In carrying themselves orderly and measuredly in the granting their last favours, they much more allure our desires and hide their own. Let them still fly before us, even those who have most mind to be overtaken : they better conquer us by flying, as the Scythians did. To say the truth, according to the law that nature has imposed upon them, it is not properly for them either to will or desire , their part is to suffer, obey, and consent : and for this it is that nature has given them a perpetual capacity, which in us is but at times and uncertain , they are always fit for the encounter, that they may be always ready when we are so :—

"Pati natae."²

And whereas she has ordered that our appetites shall be manifest by a prominent demonstration, she would have theirs to be hidden and concealed

¹ Diogenes Laertius, ii. 69.

² "Born to suffer."—Seneca, *Ep.*, 95

within, and has furnished them with parts improper for ostentation, and simply defensive. Such proceedings as this that follows must be left to the Amazonian licence: Alexander marching his army through Hyrcania, Thalestris, Queen of the Amazons, came with three hundred light horse of her own sex, well mounted and armed, having left the remainder of a very great army that followed her behind the neighbouring mountains to give him a visit; where she publicly and in plain terms told him that the fame of his valour and victories had brought her thither to see him, and to make him an offer of her forces to assist him in the pursuit of his enterprises; and that, finding him so handsome, young, and vigorous, she, who was also perfect in all those qualities, advised that they might lie together, to the end that from the most valiant woman of the world and the bravest man then living, there might spring some great and wonderful issue for the time to come. Alexander returned her thanks for all the rest; but, to give leisure for the accomplishment of her last demand, he detained her thirteen days in that place, which were spent in royal feasting and jollity, for the welcome of so courageous a princess.¹

We are, almost throughout, unjust judges of their actions, as they are of ours. I confess the truth when it makes against me, as well as when 'tis on my side. 'Tis an abominable intemperance that pushes them on so often to change, and that will not let them limit their affection to any one person whatever; as is evident in that goddess to whom are attributed so many changes and so many lovers. But 'tis true withal that 'tis contrary to the nature of love if it be not violent; and contrary to the

¹ Diodorus Siculus, xvii. 16; Quintus Curtius, vi. 5

nature of violence if it be constant. And they who wonder, exclaim, and keep such a clutter to find out the causes of this frailty of theirs, as unnatural and not to be believed, how comes it to pass they do not discern how often they are themselves guilty of the same, without any astonishment or miracle at all? It would, peradventure, be more strange to see the passion fixed; 'tis not a simply corporeal passion; if there be no end to avarice and ambition, there is doubtless no more in desire; it still lives after satiety; and 'tis impossible to prescribe either constant satisfaction or end; it ever goes beyond its possession. And by that means inconstancy, peradventure, is in some sort more pardonable in them than in us: they may plead, as well as we, the inclination to variety and novelty common to us both; and secondly, without us, that they buy a cat in a sack: Joanna, queen of Naples, caused her first husband, Andreas, to be hanged at the bars of her window in a halter of gold and silk woven with her own hand, because in matrimonial performances she neither found his parts nor abilities answer the expectation she had conceived from his stature, beauty, youth, and activity, by which she had been caught and deceived. They may say there is more pains required in doing than in suffering, and so they are on their part always at least provided for necessity, whereas on our part it may fall out otherwise. For this reason it was that Plato¹ wisely made a law that before marriage, to determine of the fitness of persons, the judges should see the young men who pretended to it stripped stark naked, and the women but to the girdle only. When they come to try us they do not, perhaps, find us worthy of their choice:—

¹ *Laws*, xi.

“*Experta latus, madidoque simillima loro
Inguna, nec lassa stare coacta manu,
Desert imbelles thalamos.*”¹

‘Tis not enough that a man’s will be good ; weakness and insufficiency lawfully break a marriage :—

“*Et querendum aliunde foret nervosius illud,
Quod posset zonam solvere virginem*”² :

why not ? and according to her own standard, an amorous intelligence, more licentious and active :—

“*Si blando nequeat superesse labori.*”³

But is it not great impudence to offer our imperfections and imbecilities, where we desire to please and leave a good opinion and esteem of ourselves ? For the little that I am able to do now :—

“*Ad unum
Mollis opus.*”⁴

I would not trouble a woman, that I am to reverence and fear :—

“*Fuge suspicari,
Cujus undenum trepidavit aetas
Claudere lustrum.*”⁵

Nature should satisfy herself in having rendered this age miserable, without rendering it ridiculous too. I hate to see it, for one poor inch of pitiful vigour which comes upon it but thrice a week, to strut and put itself in battle-array with as much eagerness as if there were in the belly a great and

¹ “After using every endeavour to arouse him to action, she quits the barren couch”—Martial, vii 58

² “And seeks a more vigorous lover to undo her virgin zone”—Catullus, lxvii 27.

³ “If his strength be unequal to the pleasant task”—Virgil, *Georg.*, iii 127

⁴ “Fit but for once.”—Horace, *Epod.*, xii 15.

⁵ “Fear not him whose eleventh lustrum is closed.”—Horace, *Od.*, ii. 4, 12, limits it to the eighth.

legitimate day's work ; a true flame of flax. And I wonder to see it so lively and throbbing and then in a moment so congealed and extinguished. This appetite ought to appertain only to the flower of beautiful youth : trust not to its seconding that indefatigable, full, constant, magnanimous ardour you think in you, for it will certainly leave you in a pretty corner ; but rather transfer it to some tender, bashful, and ignorant boy, who yet trembles at the rod, and blushes —

“ *Indum sanguineo veluti violarent ostro
Si quis ebur, vel mista rubent ubi lilia multa
Alba rosa.* ”¹

Who can stay till the morning without dying for shame to behold the disdain of the fair eyes of her who knows so well his fumbling impertinence :—

“ *Et taciti fecere tamen convicia vultus,* ”²

has never had the satisfaction and the glory of having cudgelled them till they were weary, with the vigorous performance of one heroic night. When I have observed any one to be vexed with me, I have not presently accused her levity, but have been in doubt, if I had not reason rather to complain of nature ; she has doubtless used me very uncivilly and unkindly :—

“ *Si non longa satis, si non bene mentula crassa :
Nimirum sapiunt, videntque parvam
Matronæ quoque mentulam illibenter* ”³ :

¹ “ As Indian ivory streaked with crimson, or white lilies mixed with the damask rose ”—*Aeneid*, xii. 67

² “ Though she nothing say, her looks betray her anger ”—Ovid, *Amor*, l. 7, 21

³ The first of these verses is the commencement of an epigram of the *Veterum Poetarum Catalecta*, and the two others are from an epigram in the same collection (*Ad Matrones*). They describe untranslateably Montaigne's charge against nature, indicated in the previous passage.

and done me a most enormous injury. Every member I have, as much one as another, is equally my own, and no other more properly makes me a man than this.

I universally owe my entire picture to the public. The wisdom of my instruction consists in liberty, in truth, in essence: disdaining to introduce those little, feigned, common, and provincial rules into the catalogue of its real duties; all natural, general, and constant, of which civility and ceremony are daughters indeed, but illegitimate. We are sure to have the vices of appearance, when we shall have had those of essence: when we have done with these, we run full drive upon the others, if we find it must be so; for there is danger that we shall fancy new offices, to excuse our negligence towards the natural ones, and to confound them. and to manifest this, is it not seen that in places where faults are crimes, crimes are but faults, that in nations where the laws of decency are most rare and most remiss, the primitive laws of common reason are better observed: the innumerable multitude of so many duties stifling and dissipating our care. The application of ourselves to light and trivial things diverts us from those that are necessary and just. Oh, how these superficial men take an easy and plausible way in comparison of ours! These are shadows wherewith we palliate and pay one another, but we do not pay, but inflame the reckoning towards that great Judge, who tucks up our rags and tatters above our shameful parts, and stickles not to view us all over, even to our inmost and most secret ordures: it were a useful decency of our maidenly modesty, could it keep him from this discovery. In fine, whoever could reclaim man from so scrupulous a verbal

superstition, would do the world no great disservice. Our life is divided betwixt folly and prudence: whoever will write of it but what is reverend and canonical, will leave above the one-half behind. I do not excuse myself to myself; and if I did, it should rather be for my excuses that I would excuse myself than for any other fault; I excuse myself of certain humours, which I think more strong in number than those that are on my side. In consideration of which, I will further say this (for I desire to please every one, though it will be hard to do):—

“Esse unum hominem accommodatum ad tantam morum ac sermonum et voluntatum varietatem,”¹

that they ought not to condemn me for what I make authorities, received and approved by so many ages, to utter: and that there is no reason that for want of rhyme they should refuse me the liberty they allow even to churchmen of our nation and time, and these amongst the most notable, of which here are two of their brisk verses.—

“Rimula, dispeream, ni monogramma tua est.”²

“Un vit d’amy la contente et bien traicté”³.

besides how many others. I love modesty; and 'tis not out of judgment that I have chosen this scandalous way of speaking; 'tis nature that has chosen it for me. I commend it not, no more than other forms that are contrary to common use: but I excuse it, and by circumstances both general and particular, alleviate its accusation.

¹ “For a man to conform to such a variety of manners, discourses, and will.”—Q. Cicero, *De Pet. Consul*, c. 14

² Beza, *Juvenilia*

³ St. Gelais, *Oeuvres Postiques*, p. 99, ed. of Lyons, 1574.

But to proceed. Whence, too, can proceed that usurpation of sovereign authority you take upon you over the women, who favour you at their own expense:—

“Si furtiva dedit mira munuscula nocte,”¹

so that you presently assume the interest, coldness, and authority of a husband? 'Tis a free contract: why do you not then keep to it, as you would have them do? there is no prescription upon voluntary things. 'Tis against the form, but it is true withal, that I in my time have conducted this bargain as much as the nature of it would permit, as conscientiously and with as much colour of justice, as any other contract, and that I never pretended other affection than what I really had, and have truly acquainted them with its birth, vigour, and declination, its fits and intermissions: a man does not always hold on at the same rate. I have been so sparing of my promises, that I think I have been better than my word. They have found me faithful even to service of their inconstancy, a confessed and sometimes multiplied inconstancy. I never broke with them, whilst I had any hold at all, and what occasion soever they have given me, never broke with them to hatred or contempt; for such privacies, though obtained upon never so scandalous terms, do yet oblige to some good will. I have sometimes, upon their tricks and evasions, discovered a little indiscreet anger and impatience; for I am naturally subject to rash emotions, which, though light and short, often spoil my market. At any time they have consulted my

¹ “If, in the stealthy night, she has made strange gifts”—Catullus, lxviii 144.

judgment, I never stuck to give them sharp and paternal counsels, and to pinch them to the quick. If I have left them any cause to complain of me, 'tis rather to have found in me, in comparison of the modern use, a love foolishly conscientious than anything else. I have kept my word in things wherein I might easily have been dispensed ; they sometimes surrendered themselves with reputation, and upon articles that they were willing enough should be broken by the conqueror. I have, more than once, made pleasure in its greatest effort strike to the interest of their honour ; and where reason importuned me, have armed them against myself ; so that they ordered themselves more decorously and securely by my rules, when they frankly referred themselves to them, than they would have done by their own. I have ever, as much as I could, wholly taken upon myself alone the hazard of our assignations, to acquit them ; and have always contrived our meetings after the hardest and most unusual manner, as less suspected, and, moreover, in my opinion, more accessible. They are chiefly more open, where they think they are most securely shut ; things least feared are least interdicted and observed ; one may more boldly dare what nobody thinks you dare, which by its difficulty becomes easy. Never had any man his approaches more impertinently generative¹ ; this way of loving is more according to discipline : but how ridiculous it is to our people, and how ineffectual, who better knows than I ? yet I shall not repent me of it ; I have nothing there more to lose :—

¹ In the original manuscript Montaigne had here added "the desire to generate should be purely legitimate", but he struck this out —Naigeon.

“ Me tabula sacer
 Votiva paries, indicat uvida
 Suspendisse potenti
 Vestimenta maris deo ”¹:

’tis now time to speak out. But as I might, peradventure, say to another, “ Thou talkest idly, my friend; the love of thy time has little commerce with faith and integrity ”:—

“ Hæc si tu postules
 Ratione certa facere, nihil plus agas,
 Quam si des operam, ut cum ratione insanias ”²

on the contrary, also, if it were for me to begin again, certainly it should be by the same method and the same progress, how fruitless soever it might be to me; folly and insufficiency are commendable in an incommendable action: the farther I go from their humour in this, I approach so much nearer to my own. As to the rest, in this traffic, I did not suffer myself to be totally carried away; I pleased myself in it, but did not forget myself: I retained the little sense and discretion that nature has given me, entire for their service and my own: a little emotion, but no dotage. My conscience, also, was engaged in it, even to debauch and licentiousness; but, as to ingratitude, treachery, malice, and cruelty, never. I would not purchase the pleasure of this vice at any price, but content myself with its proper and simple cost:—

“ Nullum intra se vitium est ”³

I almost equally hate a stupid and slothful laziness, as I do a toilsome and painful employment; this

¹ “ The holy wall, by my votive table, shows that I have hanged up my wet clothes in honour of the powerful god of the sea.”—Horace, *Od*, 1 5, 13.

² “ If you seek to make these things certain by reason, you will do no more than if you should seek to be mad in your senses”—Terence, *Eun*, act 1., sc. 1, v 16.

³ “ Nothing is a vice in itself”—Seneca, *Ep*, 95

pinches, the other lays me asleep. I like wounds as well as bruises, and cuts as well as dry blows. I found in this commerce, when I was the most able for it, a just moderation betwixt these extremes. Love is a sprightly, lively, and gay agitation ; I was neither troubled nor afflicted with it, but heated, and moreover, disordered, a man must stop there ; it hurts nobody but fools. A young man asked the philosopher Panetius if it were becoming a wise man to be in love ? " Let the wise man look to that," answered he,¹ " but let not thou and I, who are not so, engage ourselves in so stirring and violent an affair, that enslaves us to others, and renders us contemptible to ourselves." He said true that we are not to intrust a thing so precipitous in itself to a soul that has not wherewithal to withstand its assaults and disprove practically the saying of Agesilaus,² that prudence and love cannot live together. 'Tis a vain employment, 'tis true, unbecoming, shameful, and illegitimate ; but carried on after this manner, I look upon it as wholesome, and proper to enliven a drowsy soul and to rouse up a heavy body ; and, as an experienced physician, I would prescribe it to a man of my form and condition, as soon as any other recipe whatever, to rouse and keep him in vigour till well advanced in years, and to defer the approaches of age. Whilst we are but in the suburbs, and that the pulse yet beats :—

" Dum nova canities, dum prima et recta senectus,
Dum superest laches: quod torqueat, et pedibus me
Porto meis, nullo dextram subeunte bacillo,"³

¹ Seneca, *Ep*, 117

² Plutarch, in *Vita*, c. 4.

³ "Whilst the white hair is new, whilst old age is still straight-shouldered, whilst there still remains something for Lachesis to spin, whilst I walk on my own legs, and need no staff to lean upon."—Juvenal, iii. 26.

we have need to be solicited and tickled by some such nipping incitation as this. Do but observe what youth, vigour, and gaiety it inspired the good Anacreon withal: and Socrates, who was then older than I, speaking of an amorous object: "Leaning," said he,¹ "my shoulder to her shoulder, and my head to hers, as we were reading together in a book, I felt, without dissembling, a sudden sting in my shoulder like the biting of an insect, which I still felt above five days after, and a continual itching crept into my heart." So that merely the accidental touch, and of a shoulder, heated and altered a soul cooled and enervated by age, and the strictest liver of all mankind. And, pray, why not? Socrates was a man, and would neither be, nor seem, any other thing. Philosophy does not contend against natural pleasures, provided they be moderate, and only preaches moderation, not a total abstinence; the power of its resistance is employed against those that are adulterate and strange. Philosophy says that the appetites of the body ought not to be augmented by the mind, and ingeniously warns us not to stir up hunger by satiety; not to stuff, instead of merely filling, the belly; to avoid all enjoyments that may bring us to want; and all meats and drinks that bring thirst and hunger: as, in the service of love, she prescribes us to take such an object as may simply satisfy the body's need, and does not stir the soul, which ought only barely to follow and assist the body, without mixing in the affair. But have I not reason to hold that these precepts, which, indeed, in my opinion, are somewhat over strict, only concern a body in its best plight; and that in a body broken with age, as in a weak stomach, 'tis

¹ Xenophon, *Banquet*, iv. 27

excusable to warm and support it by art, and by the mediation of the fancy to restore the appetite and cheerfulness it has lost of itself

May we not say that there is nothing in us, during this earthly prison, that is purely either corporeal or spiritual; and that we injuriously break up a man alive, and that it seems but reasonable that we should carry ourselves as favourably, at least, towards the use of pleasure as we do towards that of pain! Pain was (for example) vehement even to perfection in the souls of the saints by penitence: the body had there naturally a share by the right of union, and yet might have but little part in the cause; and yet are they not contented that it should barely follow and assist the afflicted soul: they have afflicted itself with grievous and special torments, to the end that by emulation of one another the soul and body might plunge man into misery by so much more salutiferous as it is more severe. In like manner, is it not injustice, in bodily pleasures, to subdue and keep under the soul, and say that it must therein be dragged along as to some enforced and servile obligation and necessity? 'Tis rather her part to hatch and cherish them, there to present herself, and to invite them, the authority of ruling belonging to her; as it is also her part, in my opinion, in pleasures that are proper to her, to inspire and infuse into the body all the sentiment it is capable of, and to study how to make them sweet and useful to it. For it is good reason, as they say, that the body should not pursue its appetites to the prejudice of the mind; but why is it not also the reason that the mind should not pursue hers to the prejudice of the body?

I have no other passion to keep me in breath.

What avarice, ambition, quarrels, lawsuits do for others who, like me, have no particular vocation, love would much more commodiously do ; it would restore to me vigilance, sobriety, grace, and the care of my person ; it would reassure my countenance, so that the grimaces of old age, those deformed and dismal looks, might not come to disgrace it ; would again put me upon sound and wise studies, by which I might render myself more loved and esteemed, clearing my mind of the despair of itself and of its use, and redintegrating it to itself ; would divert me from a thousand troublesome thoughts, a thousand melancholic humours that idleness and the ill posture of our health loads us withal at such an age ; would warm again, in dreams at least, the blood that nature is abandoning ; would hold up the chin, and a little stretch out the nerves, the vigour and gaiety of life of that poor man who is going full drive towards his ruin. But I very well understand that it is a commodity hard to recover : by weakness and long experience our taste is become more delicate and nice ; we ask most when we bring least, and are harder to choose when we least deserve to be accepted : and knowing ourselves for what we are, we are less confident and more distrustful ; nothing can assure us of being beloved, considering our condition and theirs. I am out of countenance to see myself in company with those young wanton creatures :—

“Cujus in indomito constantior inguine nervus,
Quam nova collibus arbor inhæret.”¹

To what end should we go insinuate our misery amid their gay and sprightly humour ?—

¹ “In whose unbridled reins the vigour is more inherent than in the young tree on the hills.”—Horace, *Epd*, xii. 19

“ Possint ut juvenes visere fervidi.
Multo non sine risu,
Dilapsam in cineres facem.”¹

They have strength and reason on their side ; let us give way ; we have nothing to do there : and these blossoms of springing beauty suffer not themselves to be handled by such benumbed hands nor dealt with by mere material means, for, as the old philosopher² answered one who jeered him because he could not gain the favour of a young girl he made love to : “ Friend, the hook will not stick in such soft cheese.”³ It is a commerce that requires relation and correspondence : the other pleasures we receive may be acknowledged by recompenses of another nature, but this is not to be paid but with the same kind of coin. In earnest, in this sport, the pleasure I give more tickles my imagination than that they give me ; now, he has nothing of generosity in him who can receive pleasure where he confers none—it must needs be a mean soul that will owe all, and can be content to maintain relations with persons to whom he is a continual charge ; there is no beauty, grace, nor privacy so exquisite that a gentleman ought to desire at this rate. If they can only be kind to us out of pity, I had much rather die than live upon charity. I would have right to ask, in the style wherein I heard them beg in Italy : “ Fate ben per voi,”⁴ or after the manner that Cyrus exhorted his soldiers, “ Who loves himself let him follow me.” “ Consort yourself,” some one will say to me, “ with women of your own

¹ “ As the fervid youths may behold, not without laughter, a burning torch worn to ashes”—Horace, *Od.*, iv. 13, 21

² Bion

³ “ Mon amy, le hameçon ne mord pas à du fromage si frais.”—*Org. Fr.*

⁴ “ Do good for yourself.”

condition, whom like fortune will render more easy to your desire." O ridiculous and insipid composition!—

"Nolo
Barbam vellere mortuo leoni."¹

Xenophon² lays it for an objection and an accusation against Menon, that he never made love to any but old women. For my part, I take more pleasure in but seeing the just and sweet mixture of two young beauties, or only in meditating on it in my fancy, than myself in acting second in a pitiful and imperfect conjunction³; I leave that fantastic appetite to the Emperor Galba,⁴ who was only for old curried flesh: and to this poor wretch —

"O ego Di faciant talem te cernere possim,
Caraque mutatis oscula ferre comis,
Amplexique meis corpus non pingue lacertis!"⁵

Amongst chief deformities I reckon forced and artificial beauties: Hemon,⁶ a young boy of Chios, thinking by fine dressing to acquire the beauty that nature had denied him, came to the philosopher Arcesilaus and asked him if it was possible for a wise man to be in love—"Yes," replied he, "provided it be not with a farded and adulterated beauty like thine." Ugliness of a confessed antiquity

¹ "I would not pluck the beard from a dead lion."—Martial, x. 90, 9.

² *Anabasis*, ii. 6, 15.

³ Which Cotton renders, "Than to be myself an actor in the second with a deformed creature."

⁴ Suetonius, in *Vitæ*, c. 21.

⁵ Ovid, who (*Ex. Ponto*, i. 4, 49) writes to his wife, "O would the gods arrange that such I might see thee, and bring dear kisses to thy changed locks, and embrace thy withered body with my arms" I venture to differ from the Essayist in his definition of Ovid, as the present passage strikes me as most manly and pathetic.

⁶ Diogenes Laertius, iv. 34. The question was whether a wise man could love him. Cotton has "Emonez, a young courtezan of Chios."

is to me less old and less ugly than another that is polished and plastered up. Shall I speak it, without the danger of having my throat cut? love, in my opinion, is not properly and naturally in its season, but in the age next to childhood:—

“Quem si puellarum insereres choro,
Mille sagaces falleret hospites,
Discrimen obscurum, solutis
Crinibus ambiguoque vultu”¹:

nor beauty neither; for whereas Homer extends it so far as to the budding of the beard, Plato himself has remarked this as rare: and the reason why the sophist Bion so pleasantly called the first appearing hairs of adolescence *Aristogitoi* and *Harmodioi*² is sufficiently known. I find it in virility already in some sort a little out of date, though not so much as in old age:—

“Importunus enim transvolat aridas
Quercus”³

and Marguerite, Queen of Navarre, like a woman, very far extends the advantage of women, ordaining that it is time, at thirty years old, to convert the title of fair into that of good. The shorter authority we give to love over our lives, 'tis so much the better for us. Do but observe his port; 'tis a beardless boy. Who knows not how, in his

¹ “Whom if thou shouldst place in a company of girls, it would require a thousand experts to distinguish him, with his loose locks and ambiguous countenance”—Horace, *Od*, ii. 5, 21.

² Plutarch, *On Love*, c. 34. The story of these two Athenians is well enough known, but I do not quite understand the allusion of Montaigne, nor do I see anything in the received accounts of the friends to support it. Besides, the statement of such a person as Bion of Borysthenes, who lived two centuries and a half afterward, is of very slight weight any way.

³ “For it uncivilly passes over withered oaks [old women]”—Horace, *Od*, iv. 13, 9

school they proceed contrary to all order; study, exercise, and usage are their ways for insufficiency: there novices rule:—

“Amor ordinem nescit.”¹

Doubtless his conduct is much more graceful when mixed with inadvertency and trouble; miscarriages and ill successes give him point and grace; provided it be sharp and eager, 'tis no great matter whether it be prudent or no: do but observe how he goes reeling, tripping, and playing: you put him in the stocks when you guide him by art and wisdom; and he is restrained of his divine liberty when put into those hairy and callous clutches.

As to the rest, I often hear the women set out this intelligence as entirely spiritual, and disdain to put the interest the senses there have into consideration; everything there serves; but I can say that I have often seen that we have excused the weakness of their understandings in favour of their outward beauty, but have never yet seen that in favour of mind, how mature and full soever, any of them would hold out a hand to a body that was never so little in decadence. Why does not some one of them take it into her head to make that noble Socratical bargain between body and soul, purchasing a philosophical and spiritual intelligence and generation at the price of her thighs, which is the highest price she can get for them? Plato ordains in his Laws that he who has performed any signal and advantageous exploit in war may not be refused during the whole expedition, his age or ugliness notwithstanding, a kiss or any other amorous favour

¹ “Love ignores rules.”—St. Jerome, *Letter to Chromatius*.

from any woman whatever. What he thinks to be so just in recommendation of military valour, why may it not be the same in recommendation of any other good quality? and why does not some woman take a fancy to possess over her companions the glory of this chaste love? I may well say chaste :—

“Nam si quando ad prælia ventum est,
Ut quondam in stipulis magnus sine viribus ignis,
Incassum fuit”¹:

the vices that are stifled in the thought are not the worst.

To conclude this notable commentary, which has escaped from me in a torrent of babble, a torrent sometimes impetuous and hurtful :—

“Ut missum sponsi furtivo munere malum
Procurrit casto virginis e gremio,
Quod miserae oblita molli sub veste locatum,
Dum adventu matris prosilit, excutitur,
Atque illud prono præceps agitur decursu
Huic manat tristī conscius ore rubor”²

I say that males and females are cast in the same mould, and that, education and usage excepted, the difference is not great. Plato indifferently invites both the one and the other to the society of all studies, exercises, and vocations, both military and civil, in his *Commonwealth*; and the philosopher Antisthenes rejected all distinction betwixt their

¹ “For when they sometimes engage in love's battle, his sterile ardour lights up but as the flame of a straw.”—Virgil, *Georg.*, iii. 98.

² “As when an apple, sent by a lover secretly to his mistress, falls from the chaste virgin's bosom, where she had quite forgotten it; when, starting at her mother's coming in, it is shaken out and rolls over the floor before her eyes, a conscious blush covers her face.”—Catullus, lxv. 19.

BOOK III. *Upon some Verses of Virgil*

virtue and ours.¹ It is much more easy to accuse one sex than to excuse the other; 'tis according to the saying:—

"Le fourgon se moque de la paele."²

¹ Diogenes Laertius, vi. 12

² Cotton translates this, "The Pot and the Kettle." There is no exact English equivalent

END OF VOLUME THE FOURTH

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